

Chapter 8

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN
EXPERIENCE

THE EXPERIENCE of the Resurrection was the focal point in Christianity for the followers of Jesus. The unforeseen and surprising vindication of the authority of the leader and companion who had inspired them during the time of his ministry released a force which led them to the experience of Pentecost. The new faith spread with remarkable speed. Within thirty years Christian communities were scattered throughout the eastern Mediterranean world, in Italy, and in Rome itself.

THE GOSPELS AS EVIDENCE

Thirty years after Jesus' crucifixion the literary tradition which was to form the books of the New Testament was already started. The Epistles of Paul and the material which is reflected in the Acts of the Apostles were in being. A little later the Gospel of Mark was written, based on the oral traditions which had been handed down about Jesus. The Gospel of Luke followed toward the end of the century, and Matthew a little later. At about the same time, the Gospel of John was composed. It should be pointed out, though, that there is room for doubt about the order in which the Gospels were written, and some scholars suggest a different scheme of dating them. Virtually within a hundred years of Jesus' crucifixion the works which now comprise the canon of the New Testament (the new covenant which followed on from the old) came into being. Thus the evolution of Christian literature occurred in much less time than that of the Hebrew Bible. This enables us to get a good historical picture of apostolic times. It also raises hopes that we can present an accurate picture of the historical Jesus.

But there are difficulties. The Gospels, as their name implies, were not meant to be biographies but records of the good news which the Christian

community was actively propagating. They were concerned not so much with the details of Jesus' career as with his teachings and the saving events of his death and resurrection. They were, moreover, based on different strands of oral tradition which were interwoven but not always consistent. In some respects they were composed with an eye to consolidating the liturgical function of the Gospels with the worshiping life of the community. For these reasons scholars are by no means sure that an accurate account of the historical Jesus can be built up. Nevertheless, we know enough to establish some important features of his personality and career, though we can only hazard a guess about his inner experience or consciousness of his divine mission.

THE LIFE OF JESUS

Jesus lived in times which were bitter and confused. The Jewish nation had come within the orbit of Rome and feared for its very identity. The regions to the north and east of Samaria, including Galilee, were carved up among the puppet rulers of the house of Herod. Herod Antipas, king of Galilee, endeavored to hellenize the area. The magnificence of the city of Tiberias was testimony to his cultural ambitions, as also was Sepphoris, a few miles north of Nazareth. About the year 4 B.C., a certain Judas of Galilee led a bloody rebellion against Herod, sparked off by the question of tribute monies due to the Romans. Judas and his Zealot party captured Sepphoris and seized Herod's palace. But the revolt failed. The city was razed. Some two thousand rebels were savagely crucified. In A.D. 6, Judea was placed under the direct rule of the Roman procurator.

These events, so close to Nazareth, must have made the boy Jesus well aware of the hatreds which nourished the Zealot cause and the ruthlessness of imperial power. In this bitter atmosphere, the promise of a Messiah who would, through the force of arms, drive out the Romans and reestablish an independent commonwealth, was a powerful hope.

Not all Jews felt as the Zealots did. Others were more peaceably disposed. The influential Pharisees believed that a return to the full application of the Torah would be a means of purification and piety independent of political issues. The Sadducees worked for peaceful coexistence with Rome. The Essenes withdrew to a communal life, patiently waiting for the coming Messiah.

It was a time of argument and rivalry and uncertainty. It was a time of storm and tragedy, a crucial period for the nation. During this time Jesus lived his short life. These tensions and strifes came out in the Gospel narratives, especially because Jesus himself was attached to none of these groups, and either overtly or by implication criticized them all.

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Jesus' Relationship to Factions within Judaism

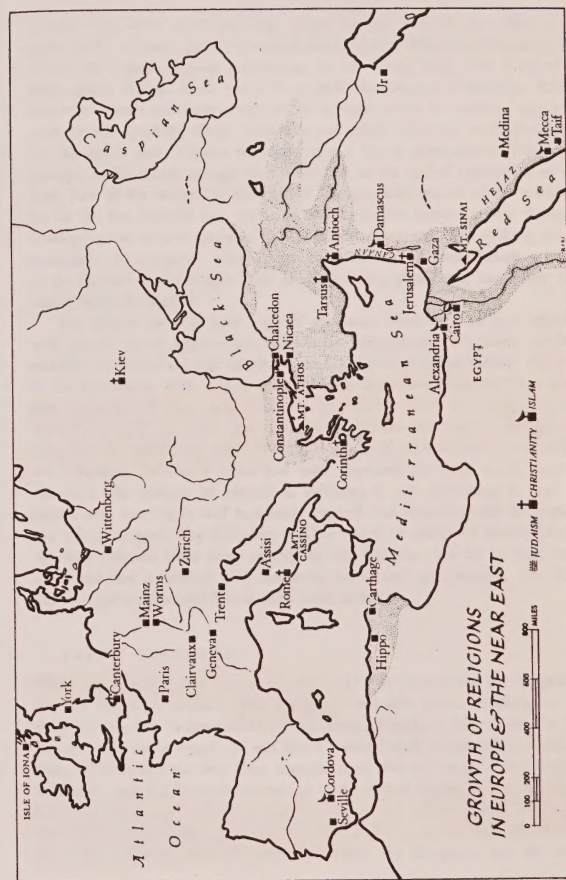
Jesus had Zealot friends. One or perhaps two of his disciples were Zealots (Simon the Zealot and maybe Judas Iscariot). Yet he rejected their violence: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's" was a repudiation of armed rebellion and a criticism of the revolt of Judas the Galilean which had been occasioned by the levying of tribute money. Though he had friends among the Pharisees, and though they do not appear to have criticized him for his messianic claims (though there is a question about how explicit these were), they were put off by his strictures on the way in which they interpreted the Law. He wished to exhibit the essence of the Law, rather than to insist on the minutiae. Healing and gathering food on the Sabbath were instances of his practical rejection of Pharisaic scruples. His interference with the Temple administration alienated him from the priestly Sadducees, and his claims to authority could not commend themselves to the scribes, traditional exponents of the Law. Though he and his disciples may have lived communally, as did the Essenes, he was not concerned with withdrawal from the world. Thus the Kingdom which he promised did not fit well into the categories and presuppositions of the people among whom he moved. Even his Judaism was suspect; he moved freely amid aliens and social outcasts. A hated tax-gatherer was one of his disciples.

Jesus' Background

What, then, was the background of this strange teacher and leader who played a short role in the stormy days of the early part of the first century? He was born in 4 B.C. or earlier (traditional dating being erroneous). According to the Gospels of Luke and Matthew, he was born in Bethlehem. But his home was probably in Nazareth, and it was there he was brought up, as the son of relatively humble parents, with a number of brothers and sisters. His trade, like that of his father, was as a carpenter, but he showed an early interest in religious matters, and came to know the Torah (the books of the Law and the Prophets) well. We know scarcely more than this: it was only at about the age of thirty that he emerged from this obscurity to the full light of his ministry. The first move in this direction was his baptism by John.

Jesus' Baptism

John the Baptist was a fiery and prophetic figure. His dress and manner of life were reminiscent of the prophets of old, and like them he called men to repentance in the face of the imminent coming of the Kingdom. He may have been influenced by Essene doctrines, but he was not interested in a withdrawn asceticism. His moral teachings no doubt attracted Jesus, though we know



next to nothing of the circumstances which impelled Jesus to submit to baptism by John in the river Jordan. According to the scriptural account, the event made a tremendous impact on Jesus, and gave him an experience suggestive of his own messiahhood:

And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."¹

This was a crucial turning point in Jesus' life. He retired to the wilderness to meditate as a prelude to his ministry. The story of the temptations which followed have the style of parables, but they may be understood to indicate the kind of choice Jesus had before him. Either he could become an active rebel and establish an earthly kingdom, or he could tread a thornier and more difficult path.

JESUS' MINISTRY

He returned to Galilee to preach. Soon he acquired four disciples from among the fishermen who plied the Sea of Galilee. Simon Peter was one of them. Simon Peter's home was in Capernaum. There Jesus based himself during his early preaching. He soon discovered evidence of his power to heal and to "cast out devils" (according to popular beliefs, madness was attributed to demon-possession). The forceful and authoritative style of his teaching, his free use of parables, and his reputation for healing powers brought a large following. The crowds indeed were sometimes oppressive, and he was forced on one occasion to preach to an enthusiastic throng from a boat. Often he preached in the synagogue, a circumstance which has led some scholars to suppose that he had been trained as a rabbi. In one or two passages in the New Testament he is addressed as "Rabbi" ("Master"). Though the evidence for the theory is inconclusive, Jesus certainly functioned in the synagogues much as a rabbi might, and with a characteristic freshness of style. But he combined with his ability to reinterpret the scriptures the force and zeal of a prophet.

Even in saying that Jesus combined these two rather different roles we are in danger of underestimating the originality of his manner of life and teaching. The most notable feature of his teaching was his constant use of parables. These served as concrete illustrations of the points he was making.

¹ Matthew 3:16-17 (RSV).

whether they were concerned with ethical matters or with the relations between God and man, and the nature of the Kingdom. They were not allegories, which had a point-to-point resemblance to the things they were designed to teach about, and in which every detail could be assigned a meaning. Rather they were stories and comparisons which brought to life the essential nature of what he was speaking about. Jesus was not much concerned with systematizing his moral and religious teachings into a list of propositions. There was perhaps, to his mind, enough of this already in the scribal expositions of the Law. Part of the reason for the allusive and parabolic nature of his teachings lay in the fact that he was trying to induce in his hearers a new vision, a turning-around of their point of view. He was concerned with shaking people from their old categories, whether they were the sophisticated thought-patterns of the learned or the simple faith of the farmers, prostitutes, and fisher folk among whom he moved.

His actions seem to have been of the same character. His easy relations with people of all types—alien Samaritans, tax-gatherers, Pharisees, insiders, outsiders—betrayed no fear of ritual regulations or social prejudices. He was, in his intercourse with others, indifferent to man-made barriers. This made him impatient of those who hedged righteousness with details and correct form: "Verily, I say unto you, That the publicans and harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you." Nevertheless, for all his criticism of the scribes and Pharisees, he was a pious Jew who respected the Law in its essential substance. He thought of himself as fulfilling it, not destroying it. But the trouble was that God's will had been overlaid and misinterpreted by popular and official religion. The Kingdom of God which he perceived already present was very different from those aspirations that the Jews had for so long nourished, and now nourished with increasing fervor and apprehension. The disciples who gathered around him scarcely understood this.

JESUS' TEACHING

What was this Kingdom which he preached? His illustrations are suggestive, but not altogether explicit. The Kingdom was like leaven working in the dough; it was like "a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers unto his vineyard"; it was like a mustard-seed; it was like a wedding-feast. What it was not was clear enough. Jesus did not mean a new political revolution; nor did he mean something in the distant future. It was already at hand, though it was coming in in a mysterious and quiet manner. The Kingdom was the community of those who followed him in the new law and in bonds of brotherly love. But more important, the Kingdom was the work

which Jesus was effecting in his own person. It could be illustrated from parables, but it could be shown more vividly in action. The action was that of Jesus in his ministry and in his coming crisis, of which he had a presentiment. The providence of God, which had guided the Jewish people, was now preparing a new and unforeseen way of manifesting its revealing and healing work.

We have seen that Jesus had found his baptism in the Jordan a turning point in his life. He began to preach the imminent coming of the Kingdom. But did he look upon himself as the Messiah? And how far was he conscious of his identity with God—an identity ascribed to him later by the Church?

On the basis of our records it is extremely difficult to penetrate to the facts of Jesus' own consciousness. But several significant pieces of evidence emerge from the Gospel narratives. When, after the spectacular success of his early preaching in Galilee, popular support began to diminish and opposition hardened, Jesus withdrew with his disciples toward Tyre and Sidon and then to Caesarea Philippi. This period of withdrawal was the time when he prepared himself for the final and fateful phase of his career, his going down to Jerusalem. It was at Caesarea Philippi that Peter is said to have recognized him as the Christ, the "anointed one," the Messiah. Jesus showed concern lest the disciples should noise this title abroad. He wanted the messianic nature of his mission to remain a secret.

The Meaning of Messiahship

The probable reason for secrecy was that this title might be misleading to those who saw in the Messiah an earthly and political savior. Jesus had already seen that his mission was very different. He referred to himself as "the Son of Man," a more mysterious title than "Messiah." It did not have the kingly and political overtones associated with "Messiah." Nevertheless, it was a term used of the heavenly Messiah in such apocalyptic writings as the Book of Daniel. If we are correct in tracing back the use of the term to Jesus himself it is an indication that he combined a sense of his own personal destiny with an intuition that a new kind of messiahship was being acted out in his own person.

Significantly, when he entered Jerusalem, he did so in conscious awareness of the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass . . . he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

This indicated that he saw himself as a royal Messiah. At the same time he had for some period been warning his incredulous disciples that the Son of Man was due to suffer and die. The Kingdom was being introduced in a very strange manner. It was, as the last verse quoted above indicates, a Kingdom—a new community—which would stretch well beyond the bounds of the Jewish people themselves. Although Jesus had said elsewhere: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel," and made other statements suggestive that his mission, like that of prophets before him, was essentially confined to the Jewish people, his thoughts at the outset of his dramatic ministry changed as he saw his function in a much wider context. The faith of Israel, rather than being confined to the nation, was to be made universal.

Jesus' Ideas of the Divine

Another feature of Jesus' estimate of himself can be seen in the way in which he prayed. He used the term *Abba*, a familiar and endearing word for "Father," and it suggested an original and intimate, loving relationship with God; he evidently felt that the spirit of this loving Father was upon him. Yet it is unrealistic to suppose that he felt himself so thoroughly possessed, so to speak, by God that his human personality was merely a vehicle for divine action. His prayer in the garden at Gethsemane indicated the struggle which his suffering role cost him. Also, there is a significant passage which relates to Jesus' experience of Satan, which may help to tell us something of his consciousness of the divine:

And the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject to us in your name!" And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you."²

According to the Gospels, Jesus quite often spoke of "the enemy" and of devils. One reason was the strange power which he discovered in himself for curing sickness which at that time was commonly attributed to the work of demons. Here we see a hint of his profound experience of cosmic victory. "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." He may well have perceived the power of evil in the world against the foreground of a numinous and brilliant experience of the divine. His consciousness of a divine destiny is brought out in his institution of the sacrament at the Last Supper. Here was an act with

² Luke 10:17-19 (RSV).

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ritual overtones (though whether it was intended as a Passover meal or something else is a matter for debate) which seemed to indicate his impending death. The Church enacted this custom of the Last Supper from early times. It would be surprising if the first Christians' retrospective interpretation of the meal as something specially instituted by Jesus was wrong. Jesus, then, not only envisioned his death, but also the time beyond, when his Kingdom would continue among a community of believers. These facts point to a consciousness on the part of Jesus that his work was more than that of a prophet and teacher: it was a messianic role, one which was original and startling and at the same time tragic. There can be no better indication of the originality of Jesus' mind than the fact that he felt the call to kingship, yet repudiated all the popular interpretations of the messianic hope.

The Gospels are shot through with suggestions of the bafflement his followers felt in the face of his words and personality. There was a mysterious and forceful quality about him which accounted both for people's loyalty to him and for their misunderstandings of his teachings. His disciples followed him, but they were uncertain of where his path lay. He enjoyed wedding-feasts and parties and conversation: yet however easily he may have moved among men and women, he was distinguished by an amazing, and even presumptuous authority. We cannot say more than this about Jesus' personality and inner experience. Perhaps even some of these statements are unwarranted by the evidence at our disposal, since it is hard to distinguish the historical facts in the Gospel material from later interpretations.

THE CRUCIFIXION

We are in a better position to know about the nature of the Christian experience in the early Church, at that time when men could still look back with reverence, fondness, and triumph to the strange, earthly career of the man Jesus. It was a strange triumph because the way lay through crucifixion.

Jesus' Trial

The reasons for the trial and execution of Jesus are not altogether clear. Accounts in the different Gospels do not tally exactly. It seems evident that Jesus was regarded, by the Sadducees at least, as a dangerous character. The charge for which he was arraigned was blasphemy, but political considerations were in the picture as well. Jesus had come to Jerusalem in the guise of a Messiah, and he had acted brusquely in clearing the Temple of money-changing and trafficking. The Zealot cause was represented among his disciples. Though he had shown no direct signs of fomenting a revolution, his attitudes

were subversive in flavor. Under the charge of blasphemy the Council, or Sanhedrin, could not establish the death penalty, but it was able to make out a case to the Roman procurator, Pilate, claiming that Jesus had planned insurrection, for he called himself King of the Jews. Pilate wavered. Finally he decided to have him executed.

According to our accounts, there was an incident in which Pilate released a prisoner, Barabbas, giving the Jerusalem mob a choice between the two criminals. It is a strange account, for this custom of choice at the Passover is nowhere else attested. Barabbas, though supposedly a political bandit, a Zealot, was not mentioned anywhere else, and it would have been odd to release a revolutionary. There are other details which are puzzling. A possible, but highly speculative explanation of the matter is this: Barabbas' name was also the name for Jesus. In view of Jesus' use of the term *Abba*, it is possible that he himself, like a number of his circle, had a nickname, for example, "Son of Abba," i.e. Barabbas. Perhaps Pilate's question to the Jews really amounted to the dilemma, Shall I release Jesus the King of the Jews, the Jesus who is allegedly a political insurrectionary, or shall I release to you the Jesus Barabbas, the Jesus who allegedly blasphemes? The Sanhedrin could not legally execute the latter, but Pilate could execute the former. So they asked for the Barabbas to be released. This account squares with Pilate's reputation for cynicism, which is not brought out in the Gospel narrative as we have it. It also strengthens the case for Jesus' consciousness of his own special relationship to the Father. But of course such an account is speculative.

Betrayed and deserted, Jesus met his death on the cross like many another criminal and rebel under the Roman administration. It was a strange end, so it seemed, to a puzzling career. But as it turned out, this death was the prelude to a new uprush of experience among his former followers, which brought into existence the community of the church. Pilate and the others had no inkling of the fact that the rather obscure and (to twentieth-century thinking) possibly crazy prophet whom they had caused to die was to win a spectacular allegiance in the hearts of a vast number of men. Among the founders of the great faiths, Jesus stands out in an odd way insofar as his life was both brief and violent. Elsewhere in the great religions the founders were primarily teachers or vehicles of an uttered revelation. For the Christians, however, the most significant thing about Jesus was the nature of his acts.

THE RESURRECTION

What was the nature of the disciples' experience which convinced them that Jesus was again with them—restored and raised from the dead on the third

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day? A very early summary of the Christian faith is found in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians:

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas [i.e. Peter], then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.³

We can date this letter to A.D. 54, and it is interesting to note that by this time there already existed a short summary of Christ's death and his resurrection which was proclaimed by the Christians. This was the *kerygma*, or proclamation, of the earliest Church. The early Christians were not concerned merely with outlining Jesus' teaching; they wanted to tell the good news which expressed to men the fact of their salvation. But more immediately for our purpose we note in the passage an early reference to the resurrection appearances. These are given a fuller description in the Gospels. Thus, in Luke we find:

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.⁴

They explained to the stranger the events that had occurred in the city—the death of Jesus and the incredible report of the empty tomb. The stranger said:

"O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. So they drew near to the village to which they were going; and he made as though he would go further, but they constrained him, saying, "Stay with

³ I Corinthians 15:3-8 (RSV).

⁴ This and the following quotations are from Luke 24:13ff. (RSV).

us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?"

They hurried back to Jerusalem to tell of the incident.

As they were saying this, Jesus himself stood among them. But they were startled and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit. And he said to them, "Why are you troubled and why do questionings rise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have." And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them.

He led the disciples as far as to Bethany,

and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them. And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.

Accounts of the Resurrection

Needless to say, a great deal has been written about this and the other narratives of the Resurrection. Some scholars have cast doubt on the reliability of these accounts. But as we have seen, the Resurrection was a very early article of faith with the Christian community. At the time when Paul wrote the passage quoted earlier, a number of the people who had participated in these events and experiences were still alive, as he points out. The proclamation was made by men like Peter, who died for the faith. It is hardly likely that they would have been willing to undergo martyrdom on behalf of a fabrication. There can be little doubt that the disciples did undergo experiences in which they perceived Jesus in their midst and had a powerful, even frightening, sense of his risen power. It is also unlikely that the story of the empty tomb reflected only a trick played by the disciples.

However, the perception of Jesus in his resurrected form was not altogether straightforward. It is notable that he appeared only to those who were among his former associates and followers, not to the world at large. Nor was he immediately recognized by the two who were walking to Emmaus. In

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Jerusalem the disciples thought at first that he was a spirit. We may infer from these accounts that the resurrection appearances were mysterious and unexpected in character. There was a strong sense of Jesus' presence, and this was physically conceived. As their picture of the presence clarified, the disciples perceived that this indeed was the Jesus who shared their life with them: he ate broiled fish and honey in their presence. To Thomas he presented his wounded side. However we are to explain these experiences, we must note that they float ambivalently between the numinous and the physical. In many respects they reflect a feeling of some strange presence coming forth from the mysterious, invisible world; in other respects they seem like the simple perception of a material person existing in the midst of those who perceived him. The question of whether this was a physical resurrection of Jesus, whether this was merely the registering of certain psychological occurrences, or whether a third hypothesis would be more viable is a matter of faith and judgment. For our purposes in recording the history and character of the early Christian experience, it is enough to note that the disciples and early followers were convinced by these events of the continued power of Jesus and his triumph over a tragic death.

Effects of Belief in the Resurrection

Is this true?
This death had thrown the disciples into despair and disorganization. They had followed Jesus to Jerusalem, but they had not stayed with him in his hour of isolation and suffering. Their dreams, such as they were—of a new era ushered in by this powerful leader to whom they had given their allegiance—had been shattered by the events of Jesus' trial and crucifixion. It was no wonder that they began to think of returning, disillusioned, to their former occupations. Unexpectedly, they found that the leader was in a mysterious way "risen," and the movement to which they belonged, far from fading, began to rouse them in new hope and effectiveness. They began to look back with sharpened understanding on the meaning of Jesus' career. They saw in it the fulfilment of the prophecies in Deutero-Isaiah concerning the Suffering Servant. They traced their new-found power to the spirit of the Lord Jesus; and they found their position confirmed and strengthened in an extraordinary experience that befell them on Pentecost.

And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this

sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. And they were amazed and wondered, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."⁵

Glossolalia

This experience of access of power differs somewhat from the prophetic experiences described in the previous chapter. For one thing, here was a shared, a communal experience. But at the same time the numinous nature of the event was unmistakable. Here was the mysterious power of God issuing forth as it were from heaven. The phenomenon of glossolalia, or speaking with tongues, which followed this event, became fairly widespread in the early church. It is naive to suppose that the disciples spoke literally a multitude of languages all at once. It is significant that some of the witnesses thought that those who spoke thus were drunk. Evidently these people heard nothing miraculous. Speaking with tongues was a form of ecstatic, wordless utterance which conveyed to hearers the experience the disciples themselves had undergone and were undergoing—possession by a nameless and inexpressible holy power which they attributed to God. Those in whom this struck a response readily "understood" and were carried away by the holy message. Others looked on the disciples as tipsy, though, as Peter pointed out, it was unlikely that they should be under the influence of alcohol in the early morning. This outpouring of the spirit was one of the signs of the continued activity of God amid his chosen people—though now the people was not the nation of Israel, but the worshiping community of Christians in Jerusalem.

PAUL OF TARSUS

In the passage quoted earlier from Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he mentioned what he regarded as a further resurrection appearance—the occasion when he saw Christ on the Damascus Road. This was another determinative event for the history of the early Christian community. It was a shaking

⁵ Acts of the Apostles 2:2-13 (RSV).

experience for this pious Pharisee who had been prominently involved in the persecution of the Jerusalem Christians, and who was now on his way to root out the heresy in Damascus:

But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he journeyed he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed about him. And he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting; but rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. Saul arose from the ground; and when his eyes were opened, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.⁶

Paul's Conversion

Here was something analogous to a prophetic experience of the divine majesty, but instead of Yahweh, the focus of the experience was Jesus himself. Here was proof to Paul of the glorious nature of the Lord whom he had been so zealous to persecute. From that time, he gave his allegiance to the new Master. The effect of the sudden vision upon him was dramatic: the irruption of power induced hysterical blindness that incapacitated Paul for three days. To recover himself and to think out the meaning of this strange reversal of all his former ideas, Paul withdrew into upper Arabia. This period of solitude and recuperation was followed by his return to Damascus. It is interesting that he did not go up to the community in Jerusalem at this time. It was three years later that he went there to meet Peter, the chief person in the community, and James, the brother of Jesus. Meanwhile he had been proselytizing on his own account, and in the course of this activity he had evolved his own distinctive theology, which was to form a great part of the basis of subsequent Christian thought about Jesus.

Paul as Pharisee

Paul, as we have seen, was brought up in the atmosphere of the Pharisaic interpretation of Judaism. Though born at Tarsus in Cilicia, he studied at Jerusalem under the famous and respected Rabbi Gamaliel. He had been

⁶ Acts 9:1-9 (RSV).

strictly observant of the Jewish Law, and it was in relation to this early way of life that he worked out his new attitudes and doctrines. He saw in the Gospel of Jesus a new freedom which made nonsense of a continued strict adherence to the details of the Torah. Men could not find their justification before God through their own work: justification was by faith and the favor of God. Thus it was useless attempting to win God's blessing by a rigid adherence to the Law.

In Galatians, Paul likened the situation to that of an heir born to inherit his father's estate. During the period of his minority he is kept under control and not allowed the full enjoyment of that which will be his. Then the time comes when he enters into his property. The people of Israel were born to God's estate, but from the time of Abraham onward had been in a state of minority. But now the new age had dawned. The old fetters were removed. And the people of God entered into their full inheritance in the Kingdom brought in by Jesus Christ. All this meant a liberation from the manifold tabus of the Law, though it also meant a deeper goodness in conformity with the law of love. Ethical action would flow from men's acceptance of the saving work of Christ.

On the practical side, this aspect of Paul's theology was exceedingly important, for it meant that Gentile converts did not need to enter into the regulations which controlled orthodox membership of the Jewish community. In particular, there was no need of circumcision. The doctrines also meant that even within that community Christian followers could be liberated from the Pharisaical attitude. Already among the leaders of the Jerusalem community Peter had baptized the Roman centurion Cornelius, who was not circumcized. Already he had had a vision which he interpreted to mean that "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him. . . . Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well?" (Acts 10:34, 47).

The Gentile Problem

Nevertheless, the question of the status of Gentiles was the subject of severe dispute in the early community. It divided into two schools on this issue—the Judaizers, who wished to maintain the community as something strictly within the orbit of Jewish orthodoxy, and the liberals who believed that the movement should open itself out to a wider life and wider opportunities. The division occurred quite early, and there were allegations that in the communal distribution of food Greek-speaking widows were being neglected. This was merely one symptom of the division. It was agreed that a commission of seven men—not apostles (who were on the whole Judaizers)—should super-

1. The following information was obtained from a confidential source who has provided reliable information in the past.

2. The source has provided information regarding the activities of a group known as the "X" group. This group is active in the area of [redacted] and is engaged in activities that are considered to be of a subversive nature.

3. The source has provided information regarding the activities of a group known as the "Y" group. This group is active in the area of [redacted] and is engaged in activities that are considered to be of a subversive nature.

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8. The source has provided information regarding the activities of a group known as the "C" group. This group is active in the area of [redacted] and is engaged in activities that are considered to be of a subversive nature.

vise the matter and ensure equity. One of these men was Stephen, who was brought for trial by the Sanhedrin on the grounds of blasphemy and was stoned to death. Further persecution followed. These facts were highly relevant to the dispute about the Law. On the whole, the Christians had escaped severe persecution up to this time because they had kept piously to the Law. But the widespread acceptance of the principle for which Paul and others had fought meant that the Christians would not only encounter hostility from the Jews of Palestine, but would also be opposed in the various scattered communities in the world. It meant risking the severance of the movement from the body of the nation.

Meanwhile the church was growing with great rapidity abroad. Paul and Barnabas had won converts at Antioch and in other parts of Syria. Paul's first missionary journey to Cyprus and Asia Minor had implanted many new and thriving Christian communities. On their return to Antioch the missionaries recounted their successes, but it was plain to them and to the faithful at Antioch that the expansion had brought the question of the Law and of circumcision to a head. A decision had to be arrived at quickly. The two were commissioned to go to Jerusalem to consult. There, in about A.D. 49, a council was held in which the matter was debated. It was resolved as follows:

The brethren, both the apostles and the elders, to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greeting. Since we have heard that some persons from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, it has seemed good to us in assembly to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from unchastity. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.⁷

In principle Paul and his followers had won the day. But the strength of the Judaizing party was greater than might be expected from a simple reading of the documents of the New Testament, for the church in which they had their origin and through which they were collected, was, at that time, after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the demise of the Christian community there, predominantly Pauline in interpretation. As late as the fourth century

⁷ Acts 15:23-29 (RSV).

there were references to scattered Christian communities called the Nazarenes, who practiced the Jewish Law, although they were orthodox in their Christian beliefs. These seem to have been the remnants of one section at least of the Jerusalem church. For many of the members of the Jerusalem church, Christ's messianic role was still bound up very intimately with Israel.

Paul's Missionary Journeys

Encouraged, Paul went out into the mission field again—into Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece. There he delivered his famous sermon at the Areopagus in Athens. A Christian community was founded by Paul at Corinth in about A.D. 51. He stayed on there some eighteen months after which he returned to Antioch. A third journey soon followed: to Ephesus, where he spent two years, and then again to Greece. He returned to Jerusalem where his preaching about the Gentiles caused tumult and disorder. He was haled before the Sanhedrin and sent to Caesarea for trial. The trial was deferred for two years only to be reinstituted in 59. At this point Paul appealed to Caesar as a Roman citizen. This involved being tried in Rome. There he was kept in detention for two years and then released. Further missionary work followed. Finally, during the Neronian persecutions, he was killed. Throughout this period he had been tireless in preaching, teaching, and organizing. His letters give an indication of the way in which, while engaged in these tasks, he was evolving a wide-visioned theology. His teaching about the Law has been mentioned. What were the other distinctive features of the message which he planted across the Roman Empire?

PAULINE THEOLOGY

Central, of course, to Paul's teaching was the figure of Jesus. But this was not just the man Jesus: it was the Christ, who had risen in glory, and who headed a new community and guided it through his Spirit. Nor was Paul's Christ just a Messiah in the older Jewish sense. He was the Son of God and the Lord of Creation, who sat "at the right hand of the Father." All this was apparent to Paul through his dramatic experience of the risen Lord and of his realization that a new age had come to pass. The death and resurrection of Christ were the means whereby men could be saved, for by identifying themselves, in the community, with him they would be raised up likewise to glory. Christ was the savior who could give men the new freedom of the Spirit which Paul himself felt and could free them from sin.

The doctrine of salvation presupposed a view about man's normal condition. From what did man need to be saved? Paul relied here upon his knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures, though he introduced Greek conceptions as

well. The sin and slavery of man's condition was on the one hand traced back to the transgression of Adam (a theory current in the rabbinical schools); on the other hand, Paul also spoke of world-rulers, elemental spirits whose dominion over man could be evil. Man knew God, for his reason contained a divine spark. But he preferred to adore the material world. Therefore he fell into slavery. What Paul called "the flesh" became tainted. Men's moral and intellectual capacities became perverted by sin. Christ could liberate man from this state of bondage. It was not a matter of having committed particular wrongs—particular sins—but in his alienation from God, man's nature was warped and infected. Christ could restore the true divine image in him.

How is this effected according to Paul? It is through Christ's death and resurrection. Christ's death was a self-sacrifice which atoned for the sin of mankind. Christ's resurrection was a visible sign of the triumph over death which the defeat of sin entails. Paul stressed the solidarity of mankind—its being a single entity, like a clan, as well as its being composed of individuals. Thus in participating in the life of the flesh, Christ could stand as a representative of mankind. While all fell through the act of one man, Adam, so all are saved through the act of one man, Jesus. More importantly, Paul stressed another and higher kind of solidarity. The Christian community was like an organism, with Christ as its head, and in the life of the community and through baptism and the eucharist, Christians could become identified with Christ and divinized. Christ's nature was spiritual. He shared the essence of the Deity. Through union with him, men could throw off their old selves and rise above the life of the flesh into the life of the spirit.

Paul's Mysticism

Paul's emphasis upon union with Christ, upon Christ's dwelling within us, has led people to speak of his "Christ-mysticism." Though Paul was not in an obvious way a contemplative mystic such as Plotinus, there was evidence of his capacity for ecstasy and trance. In a reference to himself he wrote, in his second letter to the Corinthians:

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into Paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.⁸

In the Temple at Jerusalem on one occasion Paul went into a trance and saw Jesus. Such experiences no doubt nourished him in the travails and afflictions

⁸ II Corinthians 12:2-4 (RSV).

which he underwent—terrible floggings, shipwrecks, a stoning, perilous journeys, hunger, and thirst. Such experiences, too, help to explain something of Paul's sense of the divine indwelling of Christ. This unity with the Lord, controlling him from within, made vivid to him the way in which the life of the spirit can operate through the saving grace of the Lord Jesus. His theology was not merely an attempt to systematize and organize the teachings of a community which needed its life related to the historic past of Israel. It was also in some degree a transcript of his own experience.

Ethical Teachings

But it would be wrong to think of Paul's theology as simply an exposition of the new-life of the spirit which he enjoyed. Though he stresses grace and faith rather than works as the key to salvation, the ethical side of Paul's teachings is vitally important. By the joy of union with Christ, the Christian's behavior is profoundly altered, and his actions are informed by love—the *agapē* which Paul so eloquently delineated in his hymn-like chapter beginning "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." Faith and hope might be necessary and central to the Christian life—faith in Christ and hope of the final victory—but *agapē* was even greater than these in the new community. Not that Christians always displayed this attitude. The Epistles give plenty of indication of the dissension and difficulty which Paul encountered in the churches which he had helped to found, and the clash between the Judaizers and the liberals was not without its stormy and bitter side. Yet despite these adversities in moral life, Paul was convinced that within the Christian community there was displayed a oneness and a love which often surpassed the meticulous virtues of the Pharisaic life which he had left behind him. Men were capable of progressive sanctification, yet without asceticism, and the key to it was the love of God and the love of neighbor.

Paul's Idea of Salvation

One other side of Paul's teaching is worth mentioning. He was convinced, as were most Christians of this early period, so far as we can judge, of the speedy return of Christ in glory. At that time there would occur the judgment and the entry of the faithful into the glory of the new order. Jesus in his own sayings talked of the imminence of the Kingdom, and these words were often interpreted to mean that the final cataclysm was not far off. During the stormy and terrible years which led to the sack of Jerusalem, such hopes were particularly fervid, for the events seemed to correspond to certain signs of the Second Coming which had been handed down as the words of the Lord himself.

But time dragged on. The Christian community was loth to give up the expectation of a swift and cosmic return of their Master. The faithful, gath-

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erred in churches up and down the Empire, displayed a hope and patience in the face of adversity which was in part determined by these lively expectations. Although the early Christians were mistaken in their belief that the world order would soon cease, the doctrine of the "last things" has remained an integral part in the Christian faith. Ever since in Christian history there have been periodical predictions of the swift arrival of the Second Coming and of the establishment of the Millennium. God is still seen as working his purpose out in history, not only past but future. And Paul, in elaborating his belief in the resurrection of the body, gave distinctive character to the Christian concept of salvation. Though Paul was not too clear about the nature of the resurrection body (it was a sort of "spiritual body"), his doctrine emphasized that there would be a reconstruction of individual personality, not just a heavenly persistence of a disembodied soul which could enshrine at best only one aspect of the human being. This idea was in line with the insistence on holy living in this world, in which body and personality become a temple for the Holy Spirit.

GREEK INFLUENCES IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Paul's work as a missionary was supplemented by the labors of others—Bernabas, John, Mark, and lesser figures. Peter himself finished his life in Rome, where he was martyred. Thus the faith had spread far in thirty-five years from its Palestinian home, and the movement carried on, only briefly checked by the persecutions of the sixties, in which both Peter and Paul lost their lives. But a crisis developed toward the end of the first century, when the Church had to rely upon new leadership, after the first generation of apostles had passed away. The influx of Greek-speaking members brought into the movement new beliefs. Though some of these were legitimate from the Christian point of view, others threatened the basis of the faith.

GNOSTICISM

The churches found themselves confronted with a movement known broadly as Gnosticism. The term "Gnosticism" derives from the Greek term *gnosis*, or "knowledge." *Gnosis* meant the mystical or contemplative knowledge of the Divine Being possible for those initiated into the movement. The ideas which were circulating as the correct, but esoteric, interpretation of Christian belief had their origin both in Hellenistic mysticism and in the Jewish Essene sect, and there were also, through these sources, Zoroastrian influences. Gnosticism was most frequently embraced by those whose roots lay outside the Jewish heritage. During the second century A.D. it reached, from the point of view of

orthodox Christianity, alarming proportions. As might be expected, there was often an anti-Jewish and anti-Old-Testament flavor suffusing Gnostic teachings. On the other hand there was a Gnostic strand running through early Christianity.

A main feature of the varied strands of Gnostic teaching (which ranged from beliefs which were elaborated in philosophical terms to others which incorporated astrology and a complex mythology) was that this world, the material world which man inhabited, was evil, and was antagonistic toward the higher good. However, among some men there existed a divine spark. Such "spiritual" men, by turning from the evil world of matter, could ascend to the divine Source from which they ultimately had their being. Others were trapped in the bonds of matter—those were the "fleshy" men. Thus the faith of Gnosticism tended to be esoteric, confined to the few.

In order to explain the evil nature of the world, and at the same time to account for the difference between Gnosticism and the teachings of the Old Testament, the Gnostics commonly made a distinction between the Divine Being and a lower Creator, the Demiurge, who emanated from the former. The Demiurge was implicated in a cosmic fall, and so the world he created was infected with evil. He was the being whom the Old Testament writers referred to as Yahweh. For many Gnostics the God of the Old Testament was cruel and capricious, not at all to be identified with the *Abba*, the loving Father, whom Jesus spoke of. In order that spiritual men should be enabled to turn back to the divine Source, Jesus was sent as a Redeemer, though it was commonly held that the man Jesus was just an appearance projected onto the stage of human history, and not a fleshly incarnation of the Divine Being.

Generally speaking, the way to *gnosis*, to the supernatural knowledge and union with the Divine Being, was through asceticism and withdrawal from the material world. But some Gnostic groups turned in the opposite direction, believing that the spiritual man rises "beyond good and evil"; these groups instituted orgiastic cults through which the adherents gave expression to their superiority to the moral law. The ascetic side of Gnosticism pointed clearly to the mystical and contemplative nature of the experience at which these people aimed, but their mysticism was never properly integrated either with belief in Jesus or with the worship of a personal Creator. The Creator was demoted to the status of an evil Demiurge, and thereby the insights of prophetic monotheism were submerged; also, Jesus played an unreal role in the cosmic drama. For these reasons, Gnosticism cut at the roots of Christian belief.

Marcion

Though a Christian, and not properly speaking a Gnostic, Marcion (who died about A.D. 160) betrayed anti-Jewish tendencies. He expressed a viewpoint

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which threatened the integrity of Christian belief though he considered his philosophy the true interpretation of Christianity. A rich ship-owner of Sinope on the Black Sea, he made his way to Rome in 140. There he organized his followers and set up a separate community within the Christian community. Because of his excellent gifts for administration, his followers spread widely over the Mediterranean world. His new organization constituted a powerful challenge to the Church in the latter part of the second century. Though he was not, like the Gnostics, much concerned with mysticism, he reacted strongly against the Law enshrined in the Hebrew scriptures. For him, love was the all-important thing. He claimed that Paul, in some of the writings ascribed to him, had seen this point clearly, and that the Christian communities, in continuing to make use of the Old Testament had betrayed Paul's insight. Yahweh was, for Marcion, the evil Demiurge: Jesus' work had consisted in the overthrow of this diabolical being. Jesus' God, he maintained, was the supreme God of love, very different in character from the law-imposing Demiurge. Not surprisingly, Marcion was excommunicated in A.D. 144.

The appeal of Marcion lay in the fact that he exaggerated a truth, namely that Jesus' teaching, and the interpretation of his life as expressed by Paul, were not totally in line with the earlier Jewish conception of the Law. He believed that the Old Testament by itself did not delineate fully the God of Jesus. Insofar as there was a distinctive quality in Jesus' attitudes and in Christian belief, it meant that the Old Testament conception of God was lacking or misleading.

The Forming of the Canon

The Marcionite position, like that of the Gnostics, made nonsense of an important aspect of Jesus' life—his claim to "fulfill" the Law and the Prophets. By destroying this monotheistic basis of the Christian faith such doctrines allowed entry to all kinds of extraneous mythological ideas. So the orthodox Christian community felt itself bound to react sharply. Since Marcion had denied the authenticity of some of the Gospels and other accepted writings, and since the Gnostics appealed to an esoteric and secret tradition which, they alleged, had been handed down privately from the apostles, it became necessary to take some stand on the authority and composition of the canon of Christian writings. The so-called Church Fathers who opposed Gnosticism and Marcion pointed out clearly that these doctrines ran contrary to the plain meaning of scripture, and that if the canon were given a general acceptance, Christians would have an authority independent of the words of individuals. In a long process the present canon of the New Testament was evolved. Various spurious and doubtful documents were excluded, such as the apocryphal gospels. In general the criterion of the work to be included in what later was known as the New Testament was this: does it accord with the manifest

teachings of the Church which have been handed down from the apostles? Though a few borderline cases remained to be decided, the bulk of the canon was recognized as authoritative by the end of the second century A.D. Thus we can say that in a sense the scriptures derived their status from the church tradition; but once they had been recognized they became the norm of doctrine.

CHURCH STRUCTURE IN FIRST CENTURY

We have seen that Marcion was excommunicated from the Roman community. This authority of the community to exclude those who contravened the Christian message either by scandalous conduct or by erroneous teachings was one further safeguard against the influx of ideas and practices which threatened the integrity of the faith in these relatively early days. But these pressures brought about a hardening of the organization of the Church. It was largely during this period that the institutions which came to typify the Church were evolved and fixed.

Unfortunately, our evidence is fragmentary in relation to the period before the beginning of the second century A.D. Different theories of the origin and nature of the ministry of the early Church are held, notably the contrasting views that authority derived from above, from Jesus through the apostles and onward to the bishops, and, in opposition, that authority derived essentially from below through the will of the faithful as a community. The belief that the episcopal structure and the apostolic succession (that is, the succession of bishops in an unbroken line going back to the Apostles) are an integral mark of the true Church is the heart of the first theory. But the latter theory postulates that arrangements varied according to times and circumstances. A further dimension to the argument is provided by the claim that the papacy was an original institution of the Church, resting ultimately on Jesus' commission to Peter. As far as we can see both theories have some substance as applied to the first and second centuries A.D.

CHURCH STRUCTURE IN THE SECOND CENTURY

By the early second century the Church, except in one or two areas, contained the so-called threefold ministry—bishops, presbyters, and deacons. Originally the term *episkopos*, rendered into English as "bishop," meant "overseer," or "superintendent." In the New Testament we hear of those who are appointed to look after particular communities as overseers. At Jerusalem, James functioned as such a leader of the community. The duties of such superintendents were not just administrative. Their important function in ritual was the celebration of the Lord's Supper, or eucharist.

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The eucharist was, from earliest times, the most solemn and central act in the worshipping life of the community. In general, the form of worship was modeled after the services of the Jewish synagogues: readings from the scriptures, preaching, prayers; but the eucharist was a distinctive element in Christian liturgical structure. It was a memorial of the death of Christ, and an expression of his continuing presence in the midst of the faithful. It was also an expression of the mutual solidarity and love of the members of the community itself. Over this sacred meal the bishop presided. With the growth of individual communities, however, it became no longer possible for the bishop to be present at all the meeting-places. His priestly office was delegated to the presbyter (from which word, literally meaning "elder," the term "priest" itself was derived). But in addition to this sacred function, the overseer had charge of the finances and discipline of the community. The administration of alms was an important feature of his duties, for the early Christians were noted for the way in which they supported the widows and other needy members of the group. Likewise, the overseer had to ensure that the members lived a life in accord with the teachings of Christ and to encourage those who had doubts and fears. This pastoral and administrative side of the bishop's office could be onerous and complex, so that many of his duties were delegated to "servants," or deacons. These deacons were the main link between the bishop and the people. They also played a part in the administration of the eucharist. In such ways the threefold ministry was evolved. There were also lesser orders, such as the acolytes who acted as servers at the Mass when that institution had evolved into a complex ceremonial.

Primacy of Rome in Early Church

The problem of the evolution of Roman primacy is one which has divided Christians over a long period. The evidence of the institution of the papacy, as interpreted by the Roman Catholic Church, is sufficiently ambiguous for it to be possible to take up opposed positions on its basis. Without doubt the Church in Rome had from early times a special prestige. In the *Epistle to the Corinthians*, a document dating from the last part of the first century A.D., written by the Bishop at Rome, Clement, probably third successor of Peter as head of the community in the city, a dissension which had broken out in the Corinthian church is mentioned. Clement sent advice in this epistle to the members of the Corinthian church. They appear to have accepted his advice. This is testimony to the authority of the Roman community. It is also clear from a letter written by the Bishop of Carthage in the latter part of the second century that Rome sent help and aid to the churches throughout the Empire, and thus was in some sense the focal point of the world-wide community of believers.

A succession of excellent bishops further raised the prestige of Rome. Above all, the Roman Church traced its establishment back to the great apostles, Peter and Paul, the first being Jesus' chief disciple, the other the creator of the wider missionary enterprise. Bishop Stephen of Rome argued in the middle of the third century that he was the successor of Peter who had been declared by Jesus to be the rock upon which the Church would be built. Another factor in the development of papal primacy was the fact that certain bishops exercised metropolitan powers over wide areas. The Bishop of Alexandria effectively administered the Church in Libya and Egypt, the Bishop of Antioch oversaw Asia Minor, and the Bishop of Rome looked after Italy. These metropolitan superintendents had wide prestige and respect. As the hierarchy developed, it was natural for one of them to be recognized as first. In line with the facts outlined above, this was inevitably the Bishop of Rome.

Life in the Church—Social and Ethical

Meanwhile, changes were coming over the social life of the Church. In early days the communities were sufficiently small to make a real sense of fellowship possible. This was furthered by the *agape* meal, or love-feast, a supper party in which Christians met together. This originated with the eucharist, or Last Supper. But for various reasons with the passage of time the sacrament became disengaged from the actual meal. The meal was then carried on as a fellowship party, often presided over by the bishop. But with the increase of membership, these parties were carried on without direct ecclesiastical supervision. They were not always as sober and dignified as they might have been. In the fourth century church buildings were no longer used for these meetings, and the *agape*, which had become increasingly like pagan banquets, was discouraged. The simplicity of early Christian life was replaced by other ways. Women who had been encouraged to dress simply, without ornamentation and cosmetics, gradually returned to their old habits and the ways of the world crept into the community.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to suppose that the Christian Church did not maintain its essential integrity of witness. Throughout the early centuries it had been consistently opposed to idolatry. Many converts had to leave their former occupations because these involved traffic with pagan religion. In sporadic and repeated persecutions, many suffered because they would not pay service to the cult of the emperor. In their indifference to politics and unwillingness to swear allegiance to the emperor according to the official rites, the Christians were regarded as dangerously subversive. Officials and governors viewed the community with suspicion. This resulted in oppression. Odd slanders about the cultus of Christianity were circulated. They were commonly

atheists

(in a travesty of the eucharist) accused of cannibalism; and other crimes were laid at their door. The privacy of the early morning and late evening meetings (for most of the community worked during the day) and the exclusion of those not baptized from the eucharist itself (an exclusion which later came to be abolished) gave the opportunity for enemies to start rumors about the goings-on in this allegedly secret society. Though a number of Christians fell away under oppression, there remained a large body of the faithful and they sacrificed much on behalf of their faith.

To ethical concerns the Church was attentive. The Christian view of marriage, with the accompanying rule of chastity, was not admittedly different from the ideals of the best minds of pagan antiquity. But it was regarded as impressive to perceive ordinary men who were given the strength to repudiate sexual corruption and live an honorable and devoted married life.

Although the Church did not condemn slavery as an institution, slaves were part of the fellowship, and the attitude and behavior of Christian slave-owners was markedly different from the typical attitudes and behavior of the time. They considered slaves to be human beings, not tools or instruments of the owner. In these and other ways the Christian mode of life spread an enlightened and effective morality without getting itself bound to the complex of rules which had made the Jewish code so hard to follow in a wider world. Moreover, within the confines of the church there was a unity between men of different rank and nation. Although many of the early converts were poor artisans, and other slaves, there were also richer and educated people in the community. The fellowship promoted by the eucharist and the *agapé* served to break down class barriers.

EARLY CHURCH FATHERS

Clement

Meanwhile the theological teaching of the Church was developing. The apologists of the second century began to defend the teachings by showing that Christianity brought out the best in pagan philosophy. In Alexandria a school was established to give instruction in the Christian faith. Clement of Alexandria (c. A.D. 150-c. 215) was an outstanding figure who sought to give Christianity a philosophical interpretation while remaining faithful to the apostolic tradition and the revelation in the Old Testament and in Christ. He was willing to concede to the Gnostics that *gnosis* was the true end of man, but a perfection which one attained only through accepting Christ as guide and baptism as prerequisite.

Origen

The outstanding figure amid the Alexandrians was a pupil of Clement's, Origen (c. 180-c. 253/4). In the period after the persecutions under Septimius Severus in 202, Origen, though a layman, was put in charge of the catechetical school at Alexandria. Travels took him to Rome and Palestine, where he was invited by two of the bishops to preach. This was regarded as a breach of discipline by the Egyptian church, and eventually, after further troubles, Origen was deprived of his position in Alexandria. He settled in Palestine, where, during the Decian persecutions of 249-250 he was tortured. But he would not renounce his faith. He had shown in early days great zeal for the ascetic life, and making a literal interpretation of a passage in Matthew 19:12, he had actually castrated himself. But his scholarship was wide and profound, and he brought an original mind to bear on the problems of Christian theology and philosophy.

The greatest of his many writings was the *De Principiis*. The Greek original was largely lost and only fragments which we know through a later, but not always accurate Latin translation, survive. In this work Origen outlined a whole system of Christian thought. He held that God the Father ruled over the whole universe; the Son, or Logos, ruled over rational creatures; while the Spirit's activity was confined to the church. He did not hold what came to be the orthodox view of the Trinity, but in effect tended to subordinate the Person of the Son to the Father. Origen also believed in an angelic hierarchy. He even ascribed souls to the stars, a theory implicit in the astrology of the times and therefore firmly repudiated by the orthodox. He believed that through their exercise of free will, some of the angels, headed by Satan, turned to evil. Other spirits descended to the status of human beings. Thus the position of a being in the hierarchy of the cosmos was determined by one's choices. Beyond the grave men had the chance of further modes of life as demons or angels, and eventually they would attain salvation. Salvation would come in a final consummation in which all spirits, even the Devil, would be saved.

The universality of Origen's doctrine of salvation, together with his speculations about the pre-existence and afterlife of the soul, which reflected a modified form of the doctrine of reincarnation, scarcely commended him to later orthodox thought. Yet he advanced many of these doctrines merely as possible hypotheses rather than as fixed expressions of his thought, so that he may well have been unjustly treated by later authorities. The extent of his thought and the way in which he made use of Stoic and Platonic theories in his defense of Christian belief, gave him a lasting influence, even if his implicit

wonderful
letter about
his "pre-laps" &

Father
Son Spirit

Office of the
Attorney General
Washington, D.C.

1. The first of the three main points in the report is that the Government has a duty to protect the public health and safety of its citizens. This duty is derived from the Government's responsibility to the people and is a fundamental principle of our democratic system.

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subordinationism (i.e. the subordination of the Son to the Father in meta-physical status) paved the way for later developments in Egypt, where the Arian controversy caused a severe rift in the fabric of theological belief.

Tertullian

Very different in temper from the writers of the Alexandrian school was Origen's contemporary, Tertullian (c. A.D. 160-c. 220) of Carthage, in North Africa. Tertullian was trained as a lawyer, and practiced, it has been surmised, at Rome. He was brought up as a pagan, but in his thirties he was converted to Christianity. Unlike the Alexandrians he wrote in Latin and was a formative influence on the language of later Latin theology. He displayed stormy zeal in behalf of his new faith. He was strongly opposed to compromises with pagan philosophy: "What," he asked, "has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What has the Academy to do with the Church?" He claimed that the norm of truth was the Catholic tradition of the Church and the scriptures entrusted to the Church. He attacked various heresies, including those of the followers of Marcion and the Gnostics, and he made an important contribution to the evolution of the doctrine of the Trinity. He strongly insisted that there were three Persons, as against earlier tendencies to see the Son and the Spirit as modes of activity of the one God; but at the same time he held that the three were united in a single substance.

As a moral teacher, Tertullian was rigorist. He was shocked by the action of Callistus, Bishop of Rome, in allowing the absolution of the sins of adulterers and fornicators, provided that they were penitent. The point at issue to him was not whether such persons should be admitted to the Church: of course they should be, in line with Jesus' teaching concerning the women taken in adultery. But the real question was whether, having been baptized and then having lapsed, they should be readmitted. A similar question arose over those who had fallen away from the faith under persecution. A century after Tertullian, the major part of the North African Church was in violent schism with Rome on this issue: the Donatists, as they were called, adopted a rigorist position which the Roman See repudiated. These problems reflected the dilemma of Christian discipline. On the one hand, the Church was concerned with healing the spiritual sicknesses of the sinner and bringing him to repentance; on the other, Christianity stood for a disciplined way of life.

MONTANISM

Although Tertullian always remained strictly orthodox in his teachings, his zeal was almost of a prophetic character. This was connected with his conversion to the movement known as Montanism. Montanism originated with the

teachings of a certain Montanus, a Phrygian, in the middle of the second century A.D. The emphasis of the movement was upon ecstatic and prophetic utterance in which the believer considered himself filled with the Holy Spirit. It was puritanical in its ethical demand, and it made much of sexual continence, even among married people. It had something in common with Pentecostalist revivals of a much later day, and constituted a reaction to the increasing institutionalization of worship. It claimed to go back to the original purity of Christianity—in the early Church, as we learned from the letters of Paul, ecstatic prophecy, or speaking with tongues, was a feature of the life of the community. Although orthodox in their beliefs on the whole, the Montanists aroused suspicion from the fact that they claimed direct access to the Spirit of God, and thus felt themselves free of traditional accretions. From the point of view of the orthodox the Montanists did not recognize that the Holy Spirit was not just a power poured out in prophecy, but something which informed the whole life of the Catholic Church, including its institutions. It was in virtue of the work of the Spirit that bishops consecrated bishops and that the sacraments were effective. Yet the Montanist movement was symptomatic of a state which has recurred at many different times in Christian history, the feeling that the prophetic and severely ethical demands of the faith are in danger of being overlaid by regulations and compromises.

MONASTICISM

A more lasting and effective contribution to the ascetic life was made by Christian monasticism. It had its beginnings toward the end of the third century A.D. In the early stages, it was common for ascetics to withdraw into the desert (for monasticism had its rise in Egypt), to undergo fasts, self-mortification, and the practice of meditation. Famous among such anchorites was St. Anthony, whose resistance of temptations has become a classical legend of Christendom. By withdrawal from the world, the hermit hoped to attain a form of Christian perfection. Very often the fame of these recluses spread, and they were credited with the power of transmitting divine revelations. But it was not until the early fourth century that monasticism proper was established in Egypt.

The key figure was Pachomius, who gathered about him a group of ascetics, living a communal life under monastic discipline. It was a custom for ascetics to band together in loose associations, to encourage one another in the spiritual life. But Pachomius instituted a more formal discipline. The weekly round was punctuated with worship and study of the scriptures. The monks worked at such crafts as the weaving of mats and tailoring.

Monasticism spread quite rapidly in Egypt and the East. It was further

monasticism

Monks may relate to this question.

organized under Basil the Great (c. 330-c. 379), who formulated the Rule which still forms the basis of Orthodox monasticism. Later, John Cassian (c. 360-c. 435), who had had experience of Egyptian monasticism, brought this new form of the spiritual life to the West, founding two monasteries in the south of France. His Rule formed the basis for the monastery of St. Benedict in the following century. The growth of the monastic movement throughout the church was especially important, since it provided means whereby the ascetic and contemplative life could be regulated, and where it could be pursued without excluding the more normal worldly holiness which Christianity endeavored to inculcate. It was an asceticism which was optional, and which was geared to orthodoxy. It was a way in which the Church was able to enrich the religious life, without imposing uniformity. Moreover, the monastic ideal, in its severe espousal of chastity and poverty, was a counterpoise to the laxer elements creeping into the community through the triumph and wider spread of Christianity over the Empire.

PERSECUTIONS IN THE THIRD CENTURY

That triumph was not without its painful prelude. The increasing success of the faith was sufficiently alarming by the middle of the third century for the emperor Decius to institute, in A.D. 250 and the following years, a regulation that made it mandatory for every Roman citizen to obtain a certificate to show that he had sacrificed to the emperor. The penalty for disobedience was death. Thousands were killed, countless others tortured brutally. Some Christians bribed officials to issue the necessary certificates. Others fell away from the Church. But the persecution was ultimately a failure, and was given up. Two later waves of killing, however, under Valerian and Diocletian were a bitter trial for the community.

CONSTANTINE

Diocletian's abdication two years later put an end to the worst of the brutality. But it left the Empire divided between four rulers, Constantine, Licinius, Maximinus, and Maxentius. Maxentius controlled Rome until a rapid thrust by Constantine brought him to the gates of the city in the autumn of 312. A battle was fought, the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, at which Maxentius was killed and his forces routed.

Over the course of the next dozen years, Constantine's two other competitors were eliminated. Maximinus was defeated by Licinius, and Licinius was in turn destroyed by Constantine, whose son, Cressus, annihilated his fleet near Gallipoli. The empire was reunited under a sole emperor, who celebrated

by building the splendid new capital of Constantinople on the site of the ancient Greek city of Byzantium.

Constantine's mother, Helena, was a Christian, and although his allegiance to the faith had always remained somewhat ambiguous, he made it the religion of a reformed Empire. At the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, his forces had fought under a standard known as the *Labarum*, formed of a cross and the monogram of Christ. Over the gateway to his wonderful new palace at Constantinople he placed an inscription saying that Christ had helped in his victories because of his reverence for the divine. He does not seem to have been baptized. Nevertheless, his regard for the faith was unmistakable. In his legal reforms, he was humanitarian; he closed down temples which were thought to harbor immorality; he granted land to the Church; he built churches; he declared Sunday to be a holiday; most important of all, he himself intervened in the disputes which were dividing the Church from within. He believed that a peaceful and united Church was essential to express the religion of a unified Empire.

THE GREAT COUNCILS FORMULATE DOCTRINE

Nicaea and the Arians

In this spirit Constantine convened an ecumenical Council at Nicaea in Asia Minor in 325 A.D. The term "ecumenical" derives from the Greek word *oikoumene*, meaning "the inhabited world." This was the first occasion that Christian bishops from all over the known world had met together in unimpeded conclave. The occasion for this first of the great Councils of the Church, was the Arian controversy, which had caused a considerable rift in Eastern Christendom. The question at issue was the status of Christ. Although nationalist and other non-religious factors partly account for it, the dispute was essentially doctrinal. It had momentous significance for the future of orthodoxy.

A certain priest called Arius, who belonged to the Church in Egypt, had a few years earlier put forth a view about the Son which had won a wide following. Arius, developing ideas that had been latent in Origen, held that the Son was subordinate to the Father. In particular, he argued that the Son was created by the Father in time, to be an instrument for the creation of the world. The created Logos appeared on earth in the form of Jesus, to bring men saving knowledge. Through his perfect obedience, the Son could be called "God-like," but it was not strictly correct to speak of him as divine. Arius summed all this up in the slogan "There was when he was not." In short, only the Father was truly eternal and truly God. The attractions of this doctrine

arose from mutually contradictory sources. First, Arius claimed that the view, held by those whom he opposed, that the Father and the Son were of the same substance, was not warranted in the scriptures. In this way he appealed to Bibliocists. Second, his teachings contained aspects of the Gnostic tradition which had found their way into the thought of the Alexandrian Fathers, notably Origen: salvation does not occur through the deification of man, united with the risen Christ. Rather it comes from true knowledge of God's nature and the requirements of the moral law. There was no need for the Son to be God in order to bring this saving knowledge. Third, Arius appealed to those who wished to preserve monotheism against a doctrine that suggested that Christian belief involved worship of three Gods. But Arius paid rather a heavy price. He had to concede elevated status to the Son in order to remain true to the scriptures and in accord with the opening passage of St. John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Logos . . . All things were made by him." Also in accord with the practice of Christianity, he worshiped the Son. Consequently, his monotheism was ambiguous, for he found himself paying divine worship to a being other than the one God.

The Athanasian Creed

The Council at Nicaea eventually endorsed the doctrine defended stubbornly by Arius' great opponent, Athanasius (c. 296-c. 373 A.D.), namely that the Son is "true God from true God, begotten, not made, of the same substance with the Father." This term for "of the same substance" was crucial: *homoousios*. Though the two Persons were different, they possessed the same substance. They were essentially one in their Godhood. Athanasius' formula became the subject of later dispute, some people preferring to substitute the term *homoiousios* ("of like substance") for *homo-ousios*. The "like substance" view gained general episcopal acceptance in 359, and it was only later that the Church returned fully to the Nicene formula. Although there was a contemporary joke that it was strange for the Church to divide over a single *iota* (the letter of the Greek alphabet which was the one distinguishing difference in the spelling of the two words), the difference between the two concepts was important. The controversy was not merely verbal or trivial; it reflected something important in the Christian experience. The "like substance" concept opened the way for a semi-Arian doctrine.

The Trinitarian Debate

Two motives animated the people who attempted to evolve a theology of the Trinity. First and less important, they wanted to find a way of presenting the doctrine of Christ as divine without contradictions. It was necessary to show that there could be a single divine Being who nonetheless consisted of distinct

Persons. The second more vital motive concerned the nature of redemption. This aspect made the Nicene controversy important.

Throughout the discussion of Christ's status and nature, the orthodox had to hold two positions together, if they were to account for Christ's saving work. They had to hold to his divinity against thinkers like Arius who sought to demote him to less than divine rank. And they had to preserve belief in Christ's humanity against those Docetists who believed that Christ was merely an appearance, not fully flesh and blood. "Docetism" derives from a Greek term meaning "to appear," "seem." The divinity of Christ was the prime issue at Nicaea, though there were other discussions which centered on his humanity. According to the orthodox who treasured the experience of the Church from earliest times, Christ had to be divine. Otherwise, the deification of the church member, which the experience of redemption effected, could not take place. It was through his union with Christ in the sacraments and in the Church that the Christian was raised by Christ into the sonship of God. Salvation could only come from God: if Christ was truly savior, as Christians had always witnessed, then he must be divine. In addition, there could not be two Gods. This would be a betrayal of prophetic monotheism. The Father and the Son must be one in the same sense—they must be of the same substance. But on the other hand, Jesus' incarnation would be meaningless if Christ were only an appearance, a conjuring-trick in human form, a role played by God. The redemption of mankind involved Jesus' acting on behalf of mankind, in a state of solidarity with humanity. This was impossible unless he were fully and properly human. The scriptures clearly indicated the human struggles that he underwent, and the Docetic picture was regarded as false to that authority.

In these arguments we can see that the Arian controversy involved the central point of the Christian faith, the atonement wrought by Christ. It can be expressed more directly in terms of religious experience. The Christian Church as part of its heritage possessed belief in the great and holy God who had appeared so overwhelmingly in the experience of the prophets. He was a majestic Being, to be worshiped and praised with awe and reverence. He was supremely holy, and before him men felt their inadequacy and sin. But this presented a problem. Men felt the need to expiate their sin. Much of the sacrificial system of the Jews was an attempt to embody this sentiment in concrete religious acts. But no gesture of expiation on the part of men could restore the broken unity with God. Only God was holy, and holiness had to proceed from that source. Men wished to expiate their sin, to make a concrete act toward this at-one-ment with God; but they could do nothing significant. It was to this dilemma that the early Christian message of Christ's atoning work addressed itself. If God became man, he could, as God, bring holiness; and as man he was able to expiate on behalf of, and as the representative of, man-

kind. Such sentiments, drawn from religious experience, help to explain the powerful attraction of the orthodox doctrine of salvation. The self-sacrifice of Christ, moreover, had an illuminating ethical dimension to it, in showing the meaning of that love which must inform Christian behavior.

The same logic as was applied to the relation between the Son and the Father was extended to the relation between them and the Holy Spirit. The belief in the Trinity, as consisting in Three Persons united in one substance, was written into the creeds, and became the norm of orthodoxy. Meanwhile, difficulties cropped up concerning Christ's divine and human natures. If he was both God and man, did this imply that he had a split personality? Alternatively, did it mean that his human personality was replaced in some way by the divine operating within him? The first alternative was unrealistic and logically troublesome; the second was Docetism in another disguise.

The Council of Chalcedon

At the Council of Chalcedon in 451, an orthodox position, formulated largely in negative terms, was adopted in which it was affirmed that Christ, from the start of his Incarnation, had two natures, one divine, the other human, united in a single Person.

The Nestorian Breakaway

This doctrine was aimed partly against Nestorius who spoke of two Persons in Christ, which were conjoined. His followers had already begun to break away into the Nestorian Church, which established its center in eastern Syria, then at Seleucia-Ctesiphon on the Tigris. It has continued its existence till today, though the Muslim conquest of Persia considerably reduced its numbers. An interesting offshoot of the Nestorian Church is the ancient Mar Thoma (St. Thomas) Church in South India, which, though it traces its ancestry back to the Apostle Thomas, seems to have resulted from a Nestorian mission.

One motive for Nestorius' doctrine was his objection to the increasing use of the title "Theotokos," or "Mother of God," for the Virgin Mary. This seemed to put the full humanity of Christ in doubt, and in any event it was more correct to say that it was the human side of Jesus' nature that derived from Mary's womb, rather than the divine Person. Nestorius was also concerned with combatting an opposite heresy, that of the Monophysites (literally "Those who believe in a single nature," i.e. of Christ). It was perhaps ironic that his concern not to fall into heresy brought him into heresy. The Monophysites also broke away from the Catholic Church, and survive today in four Churches—the Armenian, the West Syrian Jacobite, and the Coptic Churches of Egypt and of Ethiopia. Generally speaking, both the Monophysite and the Nestorian Churches are orthodox in their teaching and liturgy, except in the



70. Wall painting of a eucharistic meal, from catacomb of Saint Callisto, Rome (2nd century).

69. An early Christian (A.D. 350-400) statue of a woman clasping a cross, found at Sheikh Ibada in upper Egypt. Purely Christian subjects like this are rare in Coptic art.



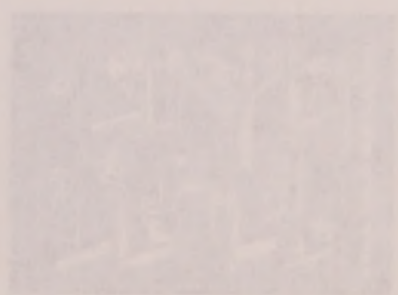
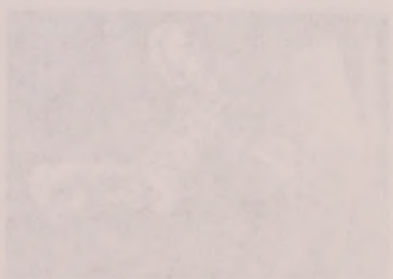
72. Resurrection Day depicted in Vysshrad, Gospel-book (11th century).

71. Early Christian rooster. In the symbolism of the Eastern Church the rooster, announcing the rising sun, was considered an emblem of the resurrection of Christ.

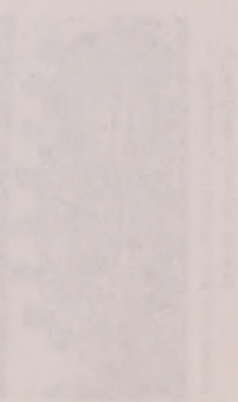
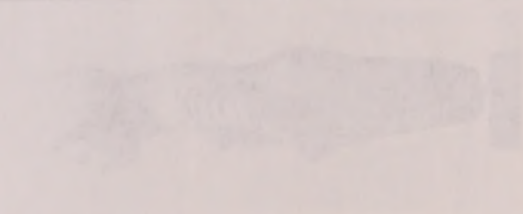
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actual doctrines which brought the schisms. The splitting-up of the Christian communities in the Near East weakened Christianity in the area, and was one of the factors accounting for the rapid success of Islam there in the seventh century.

The Council of Constantinople

The final defeat of Arianism took place at the Council of Constantinople in 381. This was largely due to the thought and work of the Cappadocian Fathers—three great theologians in the Eastern Church: St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nazianzus and St. Gregory of Nyssa. They emphasized the eternal nature of the relations between the Persons of the Trinity—the Father was ingenerate; the Son was eternally begotten of the Father, and the Spirit eternally proceeded from the Father. They believed that this inner unity and differentiation within the Trinity was the everlasting pattern of the divine life.

Though the Church had come to be the spiritual authority of the empire, it experienced much internal turbulence. In 361 a period of pagan reaction occurred under the emperor Julian, who sought to replace Christianity with a reformed paganism. His idea was based on philosophical doctrines of Neo-Platonism and it was austere in its ethical requirements. Julian was wounded and killed campaigning in Mesopotamia in 363; many of the aristocracy, however, continued their allegiance to this reformulation of older cults.

MANICHEISM

New religious forces were also being released in the empire. Manicheism, a mixture of Zoroastrian, Christian, and Buddhist ideas, arose as an important rival to Christianity. The Manichean movement was founded by Mani (216-277) in Persia. Mani had traveled in India, and was tireless in the propagation of the new faith. He was helped by the royal protection of two monarchs. A third, who was an orthodox Zoroastrian, had him imprisoned. He died a month or two later, possibly by crucifixion. His doctrines were strongly dualistic. He distinguished between the light and the darkness, equating the light with good and with God, and the darkness with evil and with matter. In certain primeval events which he described in a mythological and poetical manner, particles of light became imprisoned in the dark material world. The aim of the pious was to liberate these particles, so that they could return to the heavenly world of light. The way to accomplish this was by severe asceticism, including abstention from meat-eating, and abstention from sexual intercourse, which in generating new bodies, promoted the continued imprisonment of the light particles or souls in the demonic material world.



81. Statue of the Virgin Mary is carried through the streets of Seville, Spain, during Easter week.

However, everyone was not fit for this higher life, and so Mani organized his followers into two groups. There were the "elect," who lived a monastic and celibate life, and there were the "hearers," who were allowed to marry, eat meat, drink wine, etc. The hearers had to make annual confession of these transgressions, to undertake certain penitential fasts, and to contribute to the maintenance of the order of the elect. These arrangements reflected Buddhist categories—in the division between the Sangha and the laity, who were also called "hearers" by the Buddhists. Mani also taught the doctrine of rebirth or reincarnation, but he combined it with a belief in eternal damnation for the wicked and a final judgment under the aegis of the transcendental figure of Jesus, who played a key part in the salvation of mankind. The hearers were assured of future progress in their lives to come, while the elect would, at death, travel upward into the heavenly realm of light.

Mani attempted to blend major teachings of three different faiths. Nevertheless, the Christian element offended orthodox Christians, since the dualism of Manicheism ran counter to the fundamental belief in the essential goodness of the creation, and since, although asceticism could play a part in Christianity, as the rise of monasticism showed, it was not counted a necessary feature of the faith. Moreover, Mani held that Jesus did not truly suffer on the cross. He gave a cosmic interpretation of the crucifixion, in which the suffering of the cosmic Christ was repeated by every single soul in painful transmigration.

Later Manichean Influences

Nevertheless, Manicheism made progress in the Empire. It spread through the Middle East, Egypt, and North Africa, and reached Rome in the early part of the fourth century. From Rome it penetrated into Gaul and Spain. It also found converts in Central Asia and as far afield as Chinese Turkestan, where, as we know from an imperial edict, it flourished until the fifteenth century. A resurgence of ideas reminiscent of Manicheism and possibly derived from it occurred in the tenth century in Bulgaria and Macedonia in the Bogomil movement. This heresy was forcibly put down. In southern France in the eleventh century a similar movement occurred. The Albigensian movement won such widespread popular support that it sparked off a Crusade to crush its adherents. The Albigensians fought heroically, but were stamped out with considerable cruelty in the early years of the thirteenth century. The asceticism of their elite corresponded to the elect in Manicheism. One factor in the religious appeal of the Albigensian movement was its notable contrast to the laxity of many Catholic clergy. Thus Manicheism, though it has ultimately died out, became in many parts of the world a force to be reckoned with.

ST. AUGUSTINE

One of its temporary converts was a young man named Augustine. Augustine lived in troubled times. During his lifetime the Goth Alaric sacked Rome, an unnerving and shattering event, presaging the break-up of the Empire. The removal of the capital to Constantinople had inevitably started the process of rift between the eastern and western parts of the Empire. The western part, and the ancient city of Rome itself, was laid wide open to barbarian incursions from the north. This resulted in alienation between the Greek-speaking East and the Latin-speaking West, an alienation reflected not merely at the political level, but at the religious level too. The Eastern Orthodox Church, with its headquarters in Constantinople, gradually became detached from the Latin Church, with its headquarters in Rome.

Life of Augustine

Augustine was born in 354 in the city of Tagaste in North Africa. Like Constantine, he had a Christian mother. He was brought up as a Christian, but after going to Carthage, where he studied rhetoric at the university, he lost his rather superficial allegiance to the faith. At this time he acquired a mistress with whom he lived for fifteen years. The study of Cicero induced in him a strong interest in philosophy. He found the New Testament very inadequate from this point of view. Also as a literary work it was not to be compared with the measure and poise of Cicero. Manicheism as a doctrine seemed to him more promising, and he became a hearer. The asceticism of the religion appealed to him. Yet he found it hard to overcome his fleshly desires. No doubt his life with his mistress was much more than a carnal union, and contained a strong element of love. It was therefore difficult for him to commit himself to the higher Manichean life of the elect.

After nearly a decade of Manicheism, he became disillusioned with it. It failed to answer some of his philosophical doubts and perplexities. He moved to Rome and shortly afterward to Milan, where he taught rhetoric (roughly speaking, in modern terms, literature). This brought him into increased contact with Neo-Platonism, which seemed to him both spiritually elevated and philosophically persuasive. During his early years in Milan he was very influenced by the preaching of Ambrose, who was Bishop of Milan, and he began to feel that the path through Neo-Platonism inevitably led to the Christian faith. Augustine's intellectual doubts about Christianity came to be satisfied, but his senuous way of life remained unaltered. There occurred a famous experience which brought about his conversion. While in a garden, he heard a child's voice from over the wall saying "Tolle lege, tolle lege"—"Take up and

St.
Manicheism

read, take up and read." Seizing a copy of the Epistles of Paul which he had been reading, he opened it at random, at the passage in Romans which says: "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying." The suddenness of the voice, the appropriateness of the message—both these facts impressed themselves forcibly on Augustine's mind. He felt that it was surely a divine oracle. His doubts were resolved.

After a period of seclusion and self-discipline, he was baptized, in 387, on the eve of Easter. The following year he returned to Tagaste, where he and some friends formed a monastic settlement. He was induced by popular acclaim in 391 to become a priest, though he still led the monastic life. Five years later he was made coadjutor bishop of Hippo, and on the death of his colleague in about 396 he became sole bishop. He remained in this position until his death in 430. He died while the Vandals were besieging the town, a further instance of the barbarian incursions into the once stable Western Empire.

Influence of Manichaeism on Augustine

The events of Augustine's quest for the truth and of his conversion are told in his magnificent *Confessions*, which stands as an important, uniquely autobiographical contribution to Latin literature. The *Confessions* is invaluable in opening up to us the inner life of a sensitive, educated person living in a time of religious doubt and turmoil. We can sympathize with his struggles and with his famous prayer during the time of his Manichean allegiance: "Give me chastity and continence, but not yet." We can observe the attractions of the different creeds of the time through his eyes: the nobility of Neo-Platonism as expressed by Plotinus, whose *Enneads* had been translated into Latin by Victorinus, himself a convert to Christianity; and the inclusiveness and austerity of the more colorful doctrines of the Manicheans. One writer has referred to Mani in the following terms: "His system was apparently a hotch-potch of many long-dead heresies." This judgment fails to give us insight into the reasons why men like Augustine were drawn to Manichaeism. Why should it seem preferable to Christianity?

One reason was its inclusiveness. Mani did not confine himself to the narrow authority of one tradition. He held that all true religion essentially is one, that the teachings of the prophets, of Jesus, of Zoroaster, of the Buddha, of himself, form a unity. In short he appealed to the unease which men feel when confronted with religious conflict, when there is a warrant for respecting all great teachers of conflicting faiths. Such a syncretistic attitude is always powerful in a period of interplay between faiths, and is reflected in many movements in our own day.

A second reason for the appeal of Manichaeism was that the ascetic vegetarian life of the elect promised a *gnosis*, a knowledge of the divine Light. It promised the higher bliss of mystical and contemplative experience. It was a well-organized movement and it accommodated, through the order of hearers, those who did not feel the strength to undertake the more strenuous life of the elect. In the case of Augustine, the attractions of Manichaeism arose partly from the mystical streak in his character, which came to enjoy a fuller expression in the religion which he ultimately embraced. There is an account in the *Confessions* (VII, 10) of his inner experience of the divine Being:

I entered into my inward self, Thou being my guide . . . And I beheld with the eye of my soul, above my mind, the Light unchangeable. It was not this ordinary light which all flesh may look upon, nor as it were a greater of the same kind . . . He who knows the truth knows that Light, and he who knows it knows Eternity.

Augustine's Theology

This inner revelation coincided with what he had learned from Platonism. On the basis of his personal experience, together with the philosophical tenets of Platonism, he built up a theology, which, though never fully systematic, exerted later a profound influence on Christian thinking. It was not fully systematic, because so many of his writings were polemic and occasional. He was concerned with rebutting false views and defending orthodoxy as he saw it. Yet certain central ideas emerge out of these varied writings.

From Platonism Augustine derived the view that eternal archetypes are contained within God's nature. In knowing Forms, we know God. Expressed more briefly and succinctly, the knowledge of the truth is itself the knowledge of God. This doctrine forms an important philosophical basis for theistic belief. But unlike the Neo-Platonists, Augustine did not conceive of creation in terms of a necessary emanation of lower principles from the One. This was incompatible with the Christian emphasis on God's will in the creative act. Moreover the cosmos was not eternal, but was brought into being a finite time ago. Though the Neo-Platonists spoke of the triad of the One, the Intelligence, and the World-Soul, Augustine's triad was the Christian Trinity. He likened the Trinity to three faculties operative within man—memory, understanding, and will. These were three distinct elements of experience, but they formed a single unity in the life of the individual. Likewise the three Persons of the Christian Trinity were distinct yet united. He emphasized the love of God operative within the Trinity. It was like the lover, the beloved, and the love which binds them together. The binding love was equated with the Spirit, and was the element which flowed forth from each partner. Thus Augustine held

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that the Spirit proceeded both from the Father and from the Son in an eternal process. He differed in this from the theologians of the East, notably the Cappadocian Fathers, who spoke of the Spirit proceeding only from the Father. The extra clause "and from the Son" (*filioque*) was later incorporated into Western versions of the creed, and became a source of conflict with the Eastern Orthodox during the period when the two halves of the Church were in process of separation.

Although Augustine had a mystical bent, he was also deeply aware, from his own experience, of the power of sin. Constantly in the *Confessions* he reiterated his own unworthiness and his distance from the divine Being. This dilemma was acute in the days when he was a Manichean. He saw what he thought was the higher Good, but was somehow incapable of truly turning toward it. He was enslaved by his own nature. With his conversion to Christianity, he became capable of the higher life. He interpreted this liberation from the bonds of sin as the action of the grace of God.

Augustine's Dispute with Pelagianism

The concept of grace found a prominent place in his theology. It was a determining point in his famous dispute with Pelagianism, a doctrine expounded by Pelagius (who died about A.D. 420). Pelagius was a British monk who had come to Rome at the end of the fourth century. He was disturbed by Augustine's teaching, particularly that issue expressed in the well-known sentence *Da quod iubes et iube quod vis*—"Grant what thou commandest and command what thou wilt"—a sentence drawn from the *Confessions*. The expression of reliance on the determining operation of God's grace was unacceptable to Pelagius, because he believed strongly in personal responsibility. He believed that man embraced good or evil through his free will. Any other doctrine would discourage man from his efforts toward virtue. Such a view, corroborated by common sense experience, was relevant to the Church's belief about the Fall of Adam. If sin came through the operation of man's free will, then sin was a condition of the individual, not a consequence of Adam's Fall. The Pelagians argued that a child, at the start of his life, was like Adam before he fell. Thus there was no Fall, but rather a series of individual falls. They also held that Adam would have died, even if he had not sinned. This idea was incompatible with the impression given in the Genesis narrative and the common belief that death had come into the world as a result of Adam's primeval transgression. Pelagianism, however, for all its clarity and common sense, was condemned. Augustine was a prime mover in the refutation of its doctrines. The reasons for his hostility to them arose partly from his own experience and partly from the accumulated experience of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Augustine had a strong feeling of his own sinful nature and his distance from the holiness of God. Sin had never been a mere ethical concept to him. It had a numinous dimension. Sin was alienation from the holy Power who had revealed himself to men. What Pelagius overlooked was precisely the religious aspect of sin. As a moral doctrine Pelagianism was commendable, but as a theological interpretation it was, according to Augustine, gravely defective. It overlooked the experience of being cut off from God, save through the redemptive power of Christ. Augustine elaborated a number of theses to counter Pelagius. He believed Adam had possessed free will in its fullness prior to the Fall. But the Fall had impaired human nature. In consequence, man was unable to attain the good which he desired, unless he was helped by the healing power of God's grace. It followed from this that the attainment of good, and the blessed knowledge of God was itself God-given. On the darker side of the picture it followed that failure of attainment—damnation in other words—was attributable to God's action in not giving grace. The gift of God's favor was given freely without God's being bound down in any way by human acts. Thus it was inscrutable in its operation. Suffice it to say that some were healed and raised by God, while others were not. Out of Augustine's doctrines and the experience which gave rise to them, belief in predestination to salvation and damnation became a significant part of the Christian heritage. At a much later time the teachings of Calvin gave them full expression.

Augustine's Dispute with the Donatists

A further danger was apparent to Augustine in Pelagius' teaching. If man was able to attain moral perfection through his own efforts, what was the real need for Christ and the Church? Augustine stressed the saving work of Jesus and the vital importance of the sacraments as the channel through which the grace of God might flow. He was strengthened in this view by his controversy with the North African Donatists. The Donatists were rigoristic in their attitudes toward Christians who had lapsed under persecution or in other ways. As a consequence, they denied the efficacy of sacraments performed by unworthy priests. But Augustine could not, from his general position, countenance the notion that it was from the moral worthiness of the celebrant, through human activity, that the sacrament derived its healing and unifying power. That would have overthrown full recognition of God's grace. So he argued for the validity of the sacraments, even though the priest were unworthy. This has remained the Catholic view. It was a view that could give rise to moral laxity; but it was fully in accord with the notion of the Church as a divinely appointed institution through which and in which the Holy Spirit, despite the weaknesses of men, was operative.

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Augustine's Theory of History

The other great contribution of Augustine to Christian theology was a theory of history as expounded in his massive work, the *Civitas Dei*, or *City of God*. This was stimulated by the appalling news of the sack of Rome by Alaric in 410. Many pagans held the view that this catastrophe was a punishment for the desertion of the gods which had taken place when the Empire committed itself to Christianity. Augustine's theory not only countered this charge, but at the same time gave a justification of political institutions and a vision of the state in which true happiness could be found. He argued that there were two Cities, the earthly City and the heavenly City, or the City of God. The elect belonged to the City of God through God's grace, even though they were compelled on earth to live in the earthly City. The earthly City was a reflection of the situation in which man's nature had fallen. In origin men were naturally social, so that there would have been no need for government, class division, and other features of existing society. But seeing that they were fallen, God gave these institutions to regulate men's sinful nature. Thus the political structure of the state, although a necessary evil, was also a God-given thing, and a means of man's judgment. Men should not be too concerned with the evils befalling the Empire: the Empire, like Babylon, was a notable embodiment of the earthly City, but though it would pass away, this was part of the process toward the establishment of the heavenly City. The heavenly City would endure when the kingdoms of men had fallen in ruins. Of course, Augustine did not simply equate the heavenly City with the Church (many in the Church were not numbered among the elect); but it turned out that his vision was a kind of prediction. For when the Roman Empire passed away, the Church took over as the bearer and conservator of Roman civilization.

A feature of Augustine's political theory which deserves attention, and which reflects early Christian social and religious attitudes, is the view that the institutions of the world, involving the domination of one man over others, as in slavery, were not natural to man in his pristine state, and were the results of sin.

Augustine and Heresy

Augustine's attitude toward heresy was less tolerant. Now that Christianity had become a state church, it formed a spiritual but nonetheless visible complement to the state. The two could work and ought to work in harmony. Augustine believed that the state was good if it was just, but true justice demanded the proper worship of God. Therefore it followed that the state was required to put down heresy and schism, so far as it lay within its power. A New Testament text ("Compel them to come in") formed the scriptural basis

Slavery
as
sin

View of
the
Puritans
&
John Calvin
John Locke

of this doctrine. Augustine was moderate in the kind of punishment he thought appropriate for a heretic. He did not advocate the death-penalty. But he gave sanction to compulsion in religious matters. It was ironical that the Church which had had to suffer from persecution at last employed the same weapon. It did not do so directly. The heretic was handed over to the state rather than being dealt with by the Church. But in essence it used force as a means of keeping people within its fold and of inducing them to come in.

THE CHURCH AFTER THE DECLINE OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

The Church under imperial protection was an impressive body. Temples were converted to Christian use, land was granted, state ceremonies took on a Christian character. Great new festivals, including Christmas, were introduced. Hospitals, colleges, and hostels for poor strangers were erected, and the charitable work of the Christian community reached new dimensions. The authority of the Bishop of Rome increased as the power of the Empire diminished. The barbarian invaders were Arians, for Arianism had been strongly missionary in the north. But they respected the papacy, and after awhile they became orthodox Catholics. Out of the ruins of the Western Empire rose a strong Church which survived the turbulence of the so-called Dark Ages.

THE EAST-WEST SCHISM

The Filioque Clause

The barbarian invasions cut Italy off from the East and increased even further the division between Rome and Constantinople—centers of the two great wings of the Church. There had been tension between representatives of Latin and Byzantine Christianity at the Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon. In 589 at the third Council of Toledo the phrase *filioque* was introduced into the creed. The use of this addition spread, although Pope Leo III, at the end of the eighth century, refused to allow it in the Nicene Creed, being worried at the antagonism already aroused in the Eastern Church by this allegedly unwarranted addition. Photius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, severely denounced the clause in the following century. Despite attempts to patch up the dispute, the *filioque* remained a source of division and conflict between the two parts of the Church. Eastern theologians felt that the clause impaired the unity of the Trinity. They reasoned that if the Son was begotten of the Father and if the Spirit proceeded from the Father, then the Father was the single source and anchorage of divinity. But the theological quarrel over this addition to the

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creed was not the root or real cause of the division. It was merely the focusing point.

There were two general reasons for the division. In the first place the two parts of the Empire were losing touch with one another. Sometimes they were in political conflict. Both at Rome and at Constantinople the Church was, in differing ways, implicated with the state. Hence ecclesiastical division reflected political division. The second reason was perhaps more important. The Eastern Church rejected the claims to papal authority put forward by Rome. The Orthodox in the East were quite happy to accord the Bishop of Rome top place of honor in keeping with tradition going back to the great apostles Peter and Paul. But they were not willing to accept claims to universal jurisdiction. A synod held in 876 at Constantinople condemned the Pope for heresy on the grounds of the adoption of the *filioque* clause. Disputes dragged on. The final schism can be dated from A.D. 1054 when the Patriarch of Constantinople was excommunicated by the Pope. Yet in effect the two churches had gone their own way over a period of centuries.

Dispute over Icons

From the seventh century onward, Muslim armies swept through North Africa and into Spain in one direction, and throughout much of the Middle East in another. The Byzantine Empire became hemmed in, and started a long, seesaw warfare against the new power. In Byzantium itself, civilization and religion flourished, despite numerous theological and civil disputes. The menace of the Muslims, however, was connected with a controversy about icons which threw the Greek Church into turmoil during the eighth century. The Emperor Leo III (717-740 A.D.), with a view to making it easy to convert Jews and Muslims, ordered the destruction of icons. Images of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and other saints had been widely used in the East since the fifth century. They were objects of veneration. But it was easy for opponents to ascribe a more damaging interpretation about their use. The faithful, in paying respect to the saints through these paintings, could be accused of idolatry. Did it not in essence contravene the commandment against the use of graven images? If God had forbidden representation of himself, where was the justification of the use of icons? Political motives also elicited Leo's injunction: he wished to reorder the church and bring it more firmly under his control.

The fierceness of the dispute was due to contradictory religious sentiments. The issue was important. Islam was strongly opposed to representations of Allah. Similarly the Jews had never depicted Yahweh. In later times Protestants likewise opposed and destroyed church images. One reason for not wishing to portray God is that the absence of visible representation symbolizes both the invisible transcendence of God and the fact that he is not to be

thought of anthropomorphically. Special powers have often been credited to the images of the gods, and in some sense the god is thought to reside in the representation of him. But to identify God with a mere image would be blasphemous.

Throughout its fight against paganism the Church had repeated again and again that the heathen were foolish to put their trust in inanimate lumps of stone and wood. There was an association between images and idolatry. On the one hand the religious sentiment of awe before the mighty and invisible God could result in a distrust of artistic representation of him. On the other, as one of the great Orthodox theologians, John of Damascus (c. A.D. 675-c. 749), pointed out in a famous defense, icons were for the illiterate what books were for those who could read. The uneducated learned their theology largely through using their eyes. Icons enlivened the religious imagination. They could even be regarded as a means of grace. Besides, the Christian worshiper was in a different position from the Jewish monotheist or the Muslim. He believed that Christ had come down to earth and had become flesh. Surely, he reasoned, Christ's human person was something which could be represented. On the Iconoclast (i.e. the party wishing to smash the icons) side, disputants pointed out a flaw in this argument. By representing the man Jesus the icons merely depicted his human nature, thus splitting it off, heretically, from his divine nature. Such critics failed to perceive the remarkable artistic force with which many icons were endowed. The highly stylized representations of Christ showed a strangely glorious figure, not merely a human. In portraying Christ in glory as the savior, the icons could be thought to do justice to the divine aspect of Christ.

Religious sentiments were harnessed in favor of icons. They gave warmth and life to faith and they were a means of representing the divine glory. If words could evoke these qualities, why should not pictures also? However, there was suspicion that superstitions surrounded the use of images. They were often thought to possess miraculous powers. Up to a point they were substitutes for the gods of pagan antiquity who had been submerged by the onset of Christianity; so there were legitimate grounds for criticism. Eventually, after very severe persecutions, in which an attempt was made to enforce iconoclasm, the icons won. They have remained till today an important element in the life of the Eastern Orthodox Church. In 787 a General Council at which both East and West were represented, gave sanction to the use of images, holding that in venerating an image the worshiper ascribes his veneration to the person represented. A further outbreak of iconoclasm succeeded this Council, but eventually in 843 the position of icons in the Church was finally established. A great feast held in that year in honor of the images has remained a regular feature of Eastern Liturgy since. Despite this victory for the

visible, it is interesting to note that sculpture is still forbidden in the Eastern Church, in accordance with the ban on graven images. Even the crucifix is forbidden.

The Meaning of the Incarnation and Crucifixion

The writings of John of Damascus, who summed up and developed the work of the Cappadocian Fathers, illustrated the differences of emphasis between Eastern and Western ideas. In the Eastern view man was conceived as the connection between the visible and invisible worlds. He was created perfect, and was incorruptible, immortal and passionless. At the Fall these powers were lost, but a certain scope for free will remained. The image of God was not effaced entirely, even though it was damaged. The restoration of mankind to the true end for which he was created, the contemplation of God, was effected through the Incarnation. Christ in uniting the Godhead to human nature, restored that nature to its perfection. By sharing in Christ's perfect humanity, man too could be raised up and deified. The emphasis was upon the Incarnation as the saving work.

The Western tendency was to look upon Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection—but especially his death—as central to Christ's redeeming activity. If the East stressed deification, the West emphasized atonement. The distinction should not be considered too pronounced. John's writings were influential also in the West during the Middle Ages. It is interesting, however, to note that Pope Gregory the Great, at the end of the sixth century, had already expressed the doctrine which was to become normative in the Roman Church, that the eucharist was a repetition of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, and thereby was effective in propitiating God on behalf of those not present, those, for instance, in Purgatory. This emphasis on the sacrificial element in Christ's work was carried over into the interpretation of the liturgy. The Eastern and Western attitudes were compatible in this. While John and others may have looked at Christ's work positively as bringing about the possible deification of man, the West may have considered it negatively as the removal of sin. Yet both East and West recognized the two elements in the situation. The doctrine of original sin, which was largely shaped by the controversy between Pelagius and Augustine, played a much lesser role in the East than in the West. There was no belief in transmission of guilt, and both faith and works were regarded as necessary for man's justification before God.

EASTERN LITURGY

The most remarkable feature of Eastern Christianity was the sacred Liturgy. It corresponded to the Mass, but incorporated other elements. The solemnity and holiness of the long and splendid ritual, the beauty of the music—a blend

of the singing of the Jewish synagogue and the classical chants of Greece—the richness of the vestments and the color of the icons, all these blended together to make a glorious impression. In the tenth century A.D. the Russian Grand Duke Vladimir, uncertain about which faith he should espouse, sent emissaries to visit both the Western Church and the Church at Constantinople. According to the account we have, which, although it may be legendary, is nevertheless significant, the envoys reported to the Grand Duke that when they attended the Liturgy in the great church of St. Sophia:

We did not know whether we were in heaven or on earth. It would be impossible to find on earth any splendor greater than this, and it is vain that we attempt to describe it . . . Never shall we be able to forget such beauty.⁹

This was a far cry from the simple meal in an upper room at which Christ instituted the sacrament, and from the covert meetings of the early Christians in the Empire. But it was the medium through which the Eastern Church gave the ritual dimension of Christianity tremendous meaning. In the solemn celebration there was a unification of worshipers on earth and in heaven. The whole drama of the saving life of Christ was recapitulated. It is often considered necessary to participate in the Liturgy to understand Orthodoxy. The characteristic ethos of the Church is expressed in it. A paradox may be involved in this. It is often thought that the Greek Christian mind, as opposed to the Hebrew, was overly concerned with matters of belief. While the Jew was not as worried about belief as about right practice, it was a special feature of Greek Christianity from early centuries to worry about formulations of the creed and of doctrine. The Latin Church found some of the Greek distinctions overly subtle, a maze of heresies about Christ's nature. But in the religion of the Eastern Church lies the conviction that the Liturgy conveys truth made manifest. "Orthodoxy" indeed is correctly translated "right worship" rather than "right belief."

Mystical Practices of Eastern Church

Although in the centuries before the final split with Rome the Byzantine Church had fallen increasingly under political control, with the emperors exercising considerable authority even in matters of doctrine, the inner life of the Church was not neglected. The impulse toward contemplative and mystical religion was given authority by the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius, and was encouraged by the existence of many monasteries. The writings of Dionysius

⁹ From "The Chronicle of Nestor," quoted by Stephen Neill in *A History of Christian Mission*, No. 6 in the Pelican History of the Church series (London: Pelican Books, 1964), p. 20.

were thought to have been composed by a person of that name converted in Athens by Paul. For this reason they were held in great esteem in both the Eastern and Western Church, despite the fact that a few people cast doubts on the attribution. In the Eastern Church the writings achieved very high status. Innumerable commentaries were written upon them. They date in fact from about A.D. 500, and many have been composed in Syria. They expressed a mystical theology which drew upon Neo-Platonist ideas.

Through the practice of interior contemplation, in which the adept turned away from the impressions and images supplied by the senses, he was able to attain a union with the divine Being. Characteristically, God was described in a negative way: he lay beyond both affirmation and negation as used in ordinary language. This ineffable Godhead could be known, then, in a process of what was, from the point of view of the intellectual faculties, a sort of unknowing. In the vision of this Reality the soul was illuminated by the divine Light, and itself became divine. In the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius, this Neo-Platonist mysticism was harnessed to the doctrines of the Church.

The process of mystical deification was related to the work of Christ who, as we have seen, was thought through his Incarnation to have realized for men the opportunity to be restored to the divine image. Sin had come into the world through man's pursuit of pleasure. This meant that reason could no longer control the senses. The mystic, through the grace of God, could turn back from the senses to the divine Light residing within him. The vision of this Light was a constant theme of Byzantine mysticism. The Light was in turn identified with the glory of God revealed in the theophanies of the Old Testament—to Moses and the prophets there had come the radiance of God. In the New Testament emphasis was laid on the Transfiguration, where Christ himself became suffused and surrounded with light. Men could share this divine glory and participate in Christ's supernatural life. The typical Orthodox interpretation of Christ's saving work fitted in with this mystical experience of merging with the divine Light.

Monasticism in the Western Church

Meanwhile, monasticism and the life of contemplation were making progress in the West. A turning point was the work of St. Benedict (c. 480–c. 550), whose community at Monte Cassino was controlled by a Rule which set the pattern for later Western monasticism. The Rule did not impose harsh austerity, but rather a moderate asceticism. Goods were shared in common, but no stress was laid on the life of poverty. This had good effects in that the monasteries were not precluded by the Rule from maintaining resources needed for acts of mercy and charity. Monasteries thus became an important focus of social service during the Dark Ages. The communal life of the community revolved around the Divine Office. Various prayers and services were ap-

pointed at fixed times; Mattins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline. The Office was named by St. Benedict the *opus Dei*, the "work of God." This expressed the conviction that the primary task of the monk was the praise of God. The spirit of all his other activities had to flow from this center.

The discipline of the clergy as a whole was in process of becoming more uniformly regulated. The practice of celibacy among the clergy was enforced by Pope Innocent I in the early part of the fifth century. Although later in that century another pope forbade clergy to put away their spouses upon ordination, and bade them to live as brother and sister, this rule proved open to criticism. Eventually complete celibacy became the norm for the Western Church. In the East, which kept more conservatively to early practices, priests could marry before ordination and retain their wives thereafter, although it became the custom to choose celibate bishops, largely from the monasteries.

ADVANCE OF CHRISTIANITY

The missionary work of both wings of the Church continued. Cut off by Islam from the south, Christianity moved northward. The Byzantines sent missionaries out among the Balkan peoples and the Slavs. The greater part of northern and north-western Europe was proselytized by the Latins. The old Celtic Church in Britain, which had boasted of such figures as St. Patrick, St. Ninian, and St. Columba was weakened by the incursions of pagan Anglo-Saxons, but the missionary work of St. Augustine of Canterbury (died 604 or 605), who had been sent to England by Pope Gregory the Great, initiated a new and flourishing phase of Christianity in England. There was some friction between the Celtic Church and the new organization, but the differences were resolved at the Synod of Whitby in 664.

A son of the English Church, St. Boniface (680–754), played a big part in furthering missionary work in Germany. But afterward evangelical work in northern Europe changed in method from persuasion to force.

The great Charlemagne (c. 742–814) established an empire, based on the Frankish kingdom which he had inherited, which stretched from northern Spain to Bavaria. His campaigns against the North German Saxons lasted nearly twenty years. Part of Charlemagne's method of pacification was the forcible conversion of conquered tribes. Those who did not become Christians were liable to execution. He conducted a bloody enterprise, but it succeeded in making his realm a formally Christian state. On Christmas Day, A.D. 800 he was crowned Holy Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III. Thus he became the fictional successor of the Roman Emperors of the past, and he and his successors in theory continued the Empire, now conceived as "Holy" because Chris-

tian. His reign, despite the persecution and repression of northern paganism, signaled the beginning of a rebirth of culture and learning—the so-called Carolingian Renaissance. It was accompanied by administrative reforms, including ecclesiastical ones. The position and character of the Frankish clergy was raised. Christianity advanced steadily over western and eastern Europe during this period. The increase in the power and the prestige of the Church as inheritor and propagator of Latin and Greek culture imposed a spiritual and cultural unity on Europe in a period of confusion and disruption of older political institutions. It also paved the way for a more stable world in the Middle Ages. This unity and stability were the fruits of the Church's ambiguous conquest of the Roman Empire after Constantine.

INSTITUTIONALIZED CHRISTIANITY

We must now examine the changes in this institution of Christianity which was born of such humble and unpromising beginnings. In regard to religious experience, the growth of the liturgy and of monasticism developed what had been only implicit in the Apostolic Church. As men reflected on the nature of Christ, and clearly saw divinity in him, it was natural to impart to the celebration of the eucharist that numinous power which was associated with God. In the earliest days the solemnity of the occasion and the access of the power of the Holy Spirit expressed this, but the passage of time brought an inevitable elaboration of ritual which attempted to convey in moving and visible form the glory of Christ's presence among his people through the sacrament. The culmination of this evolution was the Eastern Liturgy, which transported men, so it seemed, to heaven. Although the Western rites did not attain such splendid proportions as those of the East, the same forces were at work.

The Church, through the institution of monasticism canalized and expressed a tendency toward asceticism which sometimes became exaggerated. The mystic, attracted by doctrines of the evil nature of matter, sometimes tried to impose upon all an austerity which was not in keeping with the words of Jesus. Nevertheless, the inner life of contemplation was an important form of religious experience, which in the monastic movement was harnessed to the worship of Christ.

The development of the liturgy and the extension of the contemplative ideal were fruitful for the life of the Church. So were the doctrinal reflections of the theologians of the first few centuries. The Fathers of the Church gave a shape and substance to Christian belief which was not merely determined by the desire to rebut what were regarded as dangerous heresies. Through their writings, Christianity absorbed much of Greek philosophy and classical culture. Some people, like Tertullian, saw dangers in this process. They were

afraid that revelation would become distorted if alien ideas were superimposed upon it. Nevertheless, the wedding of Jewish monotheism and Plato was fruitful.

Despite their bitterness and despite the increasingly minute and trivial nature of the issues at stake, the doctrinal disputes of the fourth century gave to Christian belief a classical form which it has never lost. Arianism and other heretical movements forced orthodox Christians to reflect more deeply on the character of the Trinity and the work of Christ. They concluded what they believed implicit in the beliefs of the Apostolic Age, that the recognition of Christ as Lord entailed nothing short of a Trinitarian doctrine when taken in conjunction with ethical monotheism as expressed in the Jewish tradition. The union of Christ's two natures, human and divine, was also necessary for understanding his redemptive work. This was conveyed by the experience of liberation and by the power of grace. But for all the advances made in Christian thought, there was a debit balance as well. Preoccupation with right belief led to persecution and a blindness to the inward nature of the faith.

Socially, the Church stood, not always easily, for uprightness, brotherliness, and chastity. But it did not bring about great changes in the institutions of the Empire it inherited. There was no move to abolish slavery. St. Augustine, while ascribing the evils of society to human sin rather than to eternal origins, was not unduly concerned to effect wide changes. This was partly because the Church had its eyes fixed on heaven, and partly because the Church's task was largely conservation in a period of increasing turmoil. It was remarkably successful in conservation. But the attainment of the status of an official faith had dangers. The Christians turned to persecution. The gap between the clergy, which took over legal and other powers, and the laity became accentuated. Before long bishops wielded an influence and power which infected the Church with worldliness. Although pagan religion was defeated, certain features lingered on in popular piety. The cult of the saints and of relics, though not without precedent in the early Church, formed a colorful and popular substitute for the dead pagan deities. Yet it was the general policy of the Church to baptize ancient cults and transform them where it could be done without idolatry. The great festival of Christmas was such a transformation of a pre-Christian feast.

In leaving this chapter to study the shattering events which gave birth to a widespread Islam, we have brought the history of the Christian experiment up to the period of the Dark Ages. This is not an altogether natural stopping place. History is a continuum, and chopping it into periods is merely an artifice which is convenient for the historian. We shall return to this fabric of Christianity in the Dark Ages to study it as the basis of the shaping of medieval Christendom.

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When All Else Fails, Follow the Directions

3

DAY ONE

"This is how you should pray. . . ."

Our Father in heaven,
thy name be hallowed;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us the wrong we have done,
as we have forgiven those who have wronged us.
And do not bring us to the test,
but save us from the evil one.

(Matthew 6:9-13, NEB)

In Matthew's record of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus closes his teaching on prayer by giving us a model. We call this the Lord's Prayer. In Christian worship this has become the most common corporate prayer, so much so that few of us pray it privately.

In Luke's Gospel, the Lord's Prayer is given in response to the disciples' request, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). Jesus' response was, "When you pray say, 'Our Father. . . .'" The prayer was really given as a guide for our *private* praying. When all else fails in our efforts at praying, we do well to follow the directions of Jesus.

Because it has become so common and is used so often in public worship, there is a danger that we have turned it into the "babbling of the Pharisees" against which Jesus warned us. Therefore, we are going to live with this model for an entire week. We want to immerse ourselves in the mood, spirit, style, and content of this prayer. When this happens, we will never be without a "way" to pray meaningfully.

This prayer, as a model, reaffirms what we considered on day seven of our first week: Prayer is relationship and relationship is personal. We are praying to a specific God whom Jesus calls *Father*. Jesus used this word out of his personal history and the history of Israel. Relationship with God always involves cleansing and purifying (holiness). The symbol of the "burning fire" is often used as it is in Isaiah's experience with the "coal of fire" in the temple (Isaiah 6), to show this work of God in our lives.

Jesus knew the commandments which underscore the righteousness of God. God may allow us to live in unrighteousness, but the consequence of that is destruction. So God is seen as a "consuming fire" (Deuteronomy

If you have not yet established a regular time for your "prayer period," try to find the *right* time for you this week. Experiment. In the morning, after work, during the lunch hour, before retiring—find the time that seems best for you.

If you discover that you can't cover all the material and exercises given for a day, don't berate yourself. Get what you can out of what you do. There is no point in rushing over three or four steps or principles, if you cannot or will not think deeply. Pray seriously about them one by one.

Don't hesitate to make decisions and resolves, but don't condemn yourself when you fail. God is patient, and he wants us to be patient with ourselves.

Intellectual assent to a great principle or possibility is important, but it does us little good until we act upon it—until we say yes in our minds.

3

4:24; Hebrews 12:29). In an ongoing prayer relationship with God, the demands of holiness and righteousness are always present.

We affirmed earlier that we need have no fear about coming to God honestly as we are. In relationship with God, change is not only possible, it is inevitable. As we give ourselves to his Lordship, we will respond to his commandments. We will experience his holiness and righteousness. Instead of being a comforting retreat from the world, prayer becomes a battleground where we wrestle with what it means to live God's life in the world—the causes that demand our allegiance, the issues deserving our energy, the persons needing God's healing love through us. This is the way Jesus modeled prayer.

Most people prefer the familiar rendering of the prayer found in the King James Version of Matthew. I deliberately used the New English Bible at the beginning to get us out of the familiar rut that may keep us from probing the depths of this great prayer.

Go back now and read that translation slowly for more meaning. Put a slash (/) after each thought, something like this

Our Father/in heaven/

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Go back now and pick out two of the thoughts that mean the most to you today. List those here and elaborate on their meaning to you. Here is a sample of what I'm talking about:

"Thy will be done"—Today, Lord, someone asked me to consider a certain job. I was flattered, but I just came to my present responsibility only six months ago. I'm frustrated. I need your guidance. I want to do your will. Assist me in sifting through selfish desires, need for recognition, temptation to greater power, opportunity for service, fulfillment and use of my talents and gifts in this total ministry of your church. Help me to decide quickly so that my attention will be focused and all my energy devoted to my ministry.

Select the two thoughts that mean the most to you. List them here and elaborate on their meaning to you as a personal prayer.

a.

b.

Stay with your two thoughts for four or five minutes, adding to what you have written if new meaning comes to you. Then say "thank you" to Christ for giving us this model.

During the day

You can quote the Lord's Prayer in twenty seconds. Even such a twenty-second "breather" may be helpful. Today, however, be more deliberate. Rather than say this prayer, *pray* it! Select some three-minute breaks during the day, and go through the prayer slowly—aloud or in your mind—stopping to consider each movement of the prayer.

DAY TWO

"Our Father who art in heaven. . . ."

Do you remember the two assumptions that we laid down on the third and fourth days of our adventure?

One, *the God to whom we pray is good.*

Two, *communication with God is possible.*

Much of our failure at prayer can be traced back to our failure in appropriating these two truths. It is important to remember that the "goodness" of God includes the dimensions of "holiness" and "righteousness" which were understood and experienced in the history of Israel. Jesus was living and sharing out of that history. His scripture was the Old Testament.

Father as an image for God is present in the Old Testament, but it is a vague and uncommon image. Using the term *Father* in addressing God was something new with Jesus. So we begin with this: "Our Father." This means that the Power to which prayer is addressed is *personal*.

"Our Father, who art in heaven." We've taken that "in heaven" too literally. As Gerhard Ebeling said in preaching on this passage, "To proclaim God as the God who is near, as Jesus did, is to put an end to the idea of heaven as God's distant dwelling place. . . . It is not that where heaven is, there is God, but rather where God is, there is heaven."⁶ To pray to the God who is "in heaven" is to pray to the God who is infinitely nearer to us than even we are to ourselves! We find him near in the depths of our being in our mind or spirit. So, Jesus said to the woman at the well in Samaria, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24, KJV).

"Our Father who art in heaven." There are two facets in this address:

"Father"—gracious, personal.

"Who art in heaven"—of the nearness of mind and spirit.

When we put these two facets together, we have a God who is gracious and good, concerned about each one of us. He is entirely personal in his regard for us, yet he transcends the limits of human personality.

3

This means again that God is good, and that communication with him is possible. God is not only the Father of all mankind, he is the God of *Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Maxie*, and _____

(write your name in this blank). A father can love his family in general only by loving the several members in particular.

Once we come to believe this, the task of prayer is to lay hold on this experience by being cared for by our Father, communicating with him. Harry Emerson Fosdick reminds us that "belief by itself is a map of the unvisited land of God's care; prayer is actually traveling the country."

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Because of individual experiences, some persons have difficulty with *father* as an image of God. Jesus came out of a tradition in which *father* had a unique meaning. He added to that meaning. Instead of *father*, you may wish to think of the person within your relationships who has cared the most for you, the one who has been committed to assisting you in fulfilling your potential.

List here the attributes and actions that you can think of which would describe the care of a father for his children, or the one who has loved you dearly.

Select four of these that would mean the most to you today.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

God wants us to have what will mean the most to us today. Let's practice receiving what he has to offer. Get in a relaxed position. Sit with both feet on the floor. Rest your hands on your legs with your palms upward. Open your hands in a relaxed fashion and imagine that you are receiving gifts from God.

Think of the first of the four attributes or actions that you listed as being the most meaningful to you. In your open hands symbolically receive it as a gift from God, and think about what it would mean to your life.

Now think of the second attribute or action of a caring Father which you listed as most meaningful to you. Receive it in the same fashion.

Now the third. . . .

And the fourth. . . .

(Some of these gifts may be anticipated in the future. Even so, the symbolic receiving of them will make you open and receptive to God's spirit within you.)

To travel in the country of God's care is to believe that he gives, and to receive his care is an adventure of the soul in the practice of prayer.

During the day

If the last part of the experience (open hands—receiving gifts) seemed superficial to you, go through the day *acting as though* God does care. Try to stay conscious of the fact that God wants to give you what you need. For this to happen, we have to be open to receive.

DAY THREE

"Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. . . ."

Today we consider two movements in Jesus' direction for our praying. Both are related.

"Hallowed be thy name. . . ." Even though the word *hallowed* is a clumsy, archaic word, the phrase rolls off our lips so smoothly. "Hallowed be thy name." We move over it so quickly and easily that we hardly ponder its meaning.

Jesus must have known that we start praying at the wrong place. How often do we move into prayer, centering immediately on our troubles, problems, anxieties, needs. Many times our praying simply is the exercise of brooding over our morbid situations. We ought to "brood" in the presence of God, but it may be no more than that—*brooding*—if we don't follow Jesus' direction.

It was no accident that Jesus instructed us:

Pray then like this: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

We are beginning where we should begin, *with God*. Before we start asking God for anything, before we start sharing with him our troubles and sorrows and anxieties, we focus on him—his glory, his love, his living presence. In this movement, hopefully we will allow his Spirit to pervade and influence our minds.

To *hallow* is to make holy. By naming God as holy in prayer, we place ourselves in a position to experience his majesty, mystery, and powerful presence. This is very important, for without this experience we just add

pious words to a distant deity. If we name, and therefore experience God as holy, we sense his hallowed, holy presence in the world.

Stop now and meditate upon that phrase—"Hallowed be thy name." Focus on the Father, his glory, love, presence, power. Spend two or three minutes with these thoughts.

Having meditated upon the meaning of this phrase, rewrite this first part of the Lord's Prayer in language that you may more commonly use.

(Your way of saying it)

"Hallowed be thy name" flows naturally into the second petition: "Thy kingdom come." Again, our focus is still outside ourselves.

That's a far-flung dream, and who stops to consider what it really means? In a sense we have no choice about the coming of God's kingdom. It has already come in Jesus. He began his public ministry with the announcement, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15, RSV). He said to the Pharisees, "The kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Luke 17:21, RSV). So, there is a sense in which God's kingdom has already come.

We need also to recognize that we do not "build the kingdom." God *brings* the kingdom. He *gives* the kingdom. It is his *design* and *doing*.

Even so, Jesus directs us to pray, "Thy kingdom come." He knew that what we focus our hearts and minds upon will become a reality in our lives. "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7, KJV).

The kingdom of God means the reigning activity of Christ over human hearts and society. So, wherever Christ's rule or reigning activity is experienced (be it in peace, human justice, in healing, in shared love, in reconciliation), there is the kingdom of God. To pray for this rule of Christ is a big petition—a huge desire. No wonder Jesus compared it to "the pearl of great price" or "the treasure hidden in a field."

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

(Matthew 13:44-46, RSV)

"Thy kingdom come." William Barclay reminds us that "this is no prayer for the man who desires to stay the way he is."

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

If the kingdom of God means the rule of Christ over human hearts and society, consider the changes that would have to take place for the kingdom to be a reality.

What changes would have to take place in your life for the rule of Christ to be dominant? These questions will help you in your reflection. What do you want more than anything else today? What is your *money*

situation today? How are you spending your money? What have you been *worrying* most about this week? What do you love most?

Be specific and write here, for your own reflection, changes necessary for the kingdom to be realized in you.

What about your community? The kingdom of God means the rule of Christ over society. What are the obvious areas of community life, social conditions, where the rule of Christ is not present?

"Thy kingdom come"—what are you willing to do to receive (or to gain, or to "real-ize") the "pearl of great price," the kingdom, *for your own life*? (Record that commitment here.)

How are you going to put your prayer, "Thy kingdom come," to work in your community?

During the day

You know by now that you don't settle the kinds of questions with which we've been dealing in a thirty-minute period. It's a lifetime proposition. For that reason we keep on praying, "Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come." Continue to reflect upon these meanings and beginnings throughout the day. In the persons and situations that you encounter today, ask yourself, "What does it mean for God's name to be hallowed here?" "What would it mean for God's kingdom to be fully realized in this situation and in this relationship?"

DAY FOUR

"Thy will be done."

3

Then Jesus came with the disciples to a place called Gethsemane and said to them, "Sit down here while I go over there and pray." Then he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee and began to be in terrible distress and misery. "My heart is nearly breaking," he told them, "stay here and keep watch with me." Then he walked on a little way and fell on his face and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible let this cup pass from me—yet it must not be what I want, but what you want."

Then he came back to the disciples and found them fast asleep. He spoke to Peter, "Couldn't you three keep awake with me for a single hour? Watch and pray, all of you, that you may not have to face temptation. Your spirit is willing, but human nature is weak."

Then he went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to pass from me without my drinking it, then your will must be done."

And he came and found them asleep again, for they could not keep their eyes open. So he left them and went away again and prayed for the third time using the same words as before. Then he came back to his disciples and spoke to them, "Are you still going to sleep and take your ease? In a moment you will see the Son of Man betrayed into the hands of evil men. Wake up, let us be going! Look, here comes my betrayer!"

(Matthew 26:36-46, Phillips)

Jesus did not teach that God would give us anything and everything we asked. There are *genuine* limitations to what is granted in prayer. Last week we considered those bold, extravagant promises of Jesus:

Ask, and it will be given you;
 Seek, and you will find;
 Knock, and it will be opened to you.
 If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed . . .
 nothing will be impossible to you.
 If two of you agree . . . it will be done.

We considered the conditions of those promises: *living in a trusting relationship with God, and asking in the spirit and under the guidance of Christ*. Now comes the summary of all conditions: "Thy will be done."

God did not give Jesus everything he asked. Jesus wasn't playing at prayer in Gethsemane. The cross was looming ahead. This was the dark night of his soul, the ultimate struggle of his life. Read the story again (printed above), and try to put yourself in Jesus' place.

Three times Jesus repeated the petition. It was not light, thoughtless, shallow "Lord, give me _____." He agonized over what was happening. So deep was his anguish that the Gospel writer says his face was stained with sweatdrops of blood.

"Let this cup pass"—if it be possible deliver me from death. "No" was God's answer to that particular petition.

In the deepest agony of his life, Jesus prayed as he had taught his disciples to pray.

When you pray say, ". . . Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

(Matthew 6:10, KJV)

My Father, if it is possible let this cup pass from me—yet it must not be what I want, but what you want.

(Matthew 26:39, Phillips)

To pray as Jesus taught is to put ourselves in the center of God's will. There is no more important dimension of prayer than this.

To pray "thy will be done" is also an affirmation of God's call and our vocation. None of us is helpless, and the hopeless "what can I do" question does not fit into a life of prayer. In our prayer we often identify our gifts and hear God's call. To pray "thy will be done" is to say, "here am I, send me!"

But there is something else in this particular teaching of Jesus. We will pass over it if we aren't careful. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" is not so much a petition in the Lord's Prayer as it is a strong, emphatic assertion. When we pray this as Jesus taught us, we are making an affirmation. Such an affirmation can work wonders in our lives. We need to petition God, even as Jesus did and make our requests known to him. But once we have done so, we should not dwell on our needs and desires. Rather, we should center upon the will of God being realized on earth—God willing to do for us "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think . . ." (Ephesians 3:20, KJV).

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Look again at the model of personhood presented on page 28. Institutionally we have become "technological" persons. We feel driven and hopelessly bound to the "systems" that determine our lives. But are we hopeless? Look at your role as a worker or citizen. What are you doing that is destructive of your best self, or the good of other persons, because you feel bound in the system? Record your conclusions here.

What will you do about it? Be specific by writing down some specific effort you will put forth.

Look at the groups of which you are a part (i.e., family, club, political party). What does praying "thy will be done" have to do with these parts of your life:

(family) _____

3

() _____

() _____

During the day

Throughout this day, stay conscious of what you have recorded during this time of reflection. As you approach your work and personal involvements, seek to make this prayer a reality: "Thy will be done."

DAY FIVE

"Give us this day the bread we need."

And he said to them, "Take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat, nor about your body, what you shall put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens; they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And which of you by being anxious can add a cubit to his span of life?"

(Luke 12:15-25, RSV)

The house of prayer is not a shop where we go to bargain and barter for the gifts of God. It is the home of the Father, with whom we live, where all the treasures of his love and concern are ours for the receiving.

"Give us this day the bread we need." This is petition; it is asking God for the common needs of life. But more than petition, it is *commitment*. In the same setting where Matthew records the Lord's Prayer, he shares that assuring word of Jesus about all our needs being satisfied by the Father.

Don't worry about living—wondering what you are going to eat or drink, or what you are going to wear. Surely life is more important than food, and the body more important than the clothes you wear. Look at the birds in the sky. They never sow nor reap nor store away in barns, and yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you much more valuable to him than they are?

(Matthew 6:25-26, Phillips)

In telling us to pray for the bread we need for today, yet at the same time not to worry about our eating and drinking, Jesus is saying all that we need to maintain our lives are gifts from God. We ought, therefore, to have no anxiety about them.

The dominant desires of our lives are the petitions of our prayers. For many of us our society has so intensified our desires that our prayer for "daily bread" has become the mark of our sinfulness. This is one of the lessons of the "rich fool." Desire has to be restrained.

This we must affirm over and over again: *God is the giver*. He gives us the things we need, or, as Luke puts it, he keeps on giving us day by day. This has tremendous implications for our lives, and especially for our praying. The accent is transferred from the life of effort to the life of faith. Many of us are able to affirm that we are utterly dependent upon God for the salvation of our souls, yet are not willing to carry this commitment into the whole of life.

I am dependent upon God for all of life! Ponder this thought for a few minutes. What does it mean? Can you accept it? Do you live as though it were true?

Here is also a great understanding of *stewardship*. All that we have comes from God. He has provided enough resources for the needs of all people. We can live on this earth which has become a "global village" if the fortunate ones who have plenty and to spare will be responsible stewards, will cease "tearing down their barns and building bigger barns," will let God determine their desires, rather than having them determined by the technology that makes us gluttonous consumers.

To believe that we are dependent upon God for our energy, for the air we breathe, for life itself, does not mean that we sit back and do nothing. Not to be anxious about tomorrow—what we are to eat, or drink, or wear, is not to diminish the meaning of our labor and the creative use of our talents. It is to dedicate all that we are to the Giver of life *and to open ourselves to receive what he has to offer us, and what he, through us, has to offer others*.

In prayer, then, we receive from God by faith all that we need to meet the demands of life. So, "give us this day the bread we need" is more than a petition; it is a *commitment*. It is saying to God: "Everything I need comes from you. I am open to receive it. I face this day, and all of life, believing that you will supply all my needs."

When we believe that our very life is God's gift, and when we act in response to that belief, then we will keep in touch with reality and with the source of reality—God himself.

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

It helps us to be very specific about our needs and to bring them to the Father. Obviously, Jesus thought it was important to pray even for "daily bread." Record your primary needs for today in these blanks as designated.

Physical and Material Needs**Spiritual and Emotional Needs****3**

It is only partially true that "man proposes and God disposes." God has already given us gifts in abundance. We are to use these gifts to meet our needs and the needs of others. Look at the list above. Are there any needs to which God has already responded by giving you the resources and talents to meet those needs? If so, commit yourself to releasing what resources you have for meeting those needs. Pray for God's guidance in using the gifts he has already given you.

There are needs in your list for which you seem to have no resources. Make a new list, designating those in the space below. You don't have to put them into categories.

Now will you pray something like this: "Lord Jesus, you've told me to pray today for the 'bread' I need. You've told me not to be anxious, though, about what I'm going to eat or drink or wear. You've assured me that if an earthly father knows how to give good gifts to his children, my heavenly Father will give even more abundantly than I can ask or think. So, here are what I think my needs are (list them as recorded above). I leave these needs to your supply, and I open myself to receive whatever you have to offer, believing that what you have to offer is far greater even than the meeting of these needs. In that assurance I commit myself anew to your loving care today. Amen."

During the day

God wants to meet the needs of all his children. He has given to some of us the gifts and resources to meet the needs of some of his other children. Somewhere today, a person whose path may cross yours prayed

the same kind of prayer that you have prayed, that God would grant them their "daily bread," that he would meet their needs. You may be God's answer for that person. Be open to that possibility today and in the days ahead. Try to be sensitive to God's desire to work in your life to fill the needs of others. Name here one person who has a need you can meet (_____). Do something today to begin to meet that need.

DAY SIX

"Forgive us . . . as we forgive."

As you begin your adventure today, pray quietly, but aloud, slowly and deliberately, the prayer Jesus taught us.

Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our debts,
As we also have forgiven our debtors;
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.

(Matthew 6:9-13, RSV)

The logic of the Lord's Prayer is so clear. We begin by focusing on God: "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." We continue by praying for the kingdom to come "on earth as it is in heaven." The focus is still on God, but is more personal in terms of his rule in our lives and in our community. It is "his will" for which we are asking.

Then we pray for "bread," the very sustenance of life, believing that we are dependent upon God for all of life.

Now comes the prayer for pardon: "And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors." Notice the word *and*, linking the prayer for pardon with the request for bread. How clear the logic! Jesus knew that God offers two kinds of food: food for the body and food for the soul, one to sustain life, the other to make life free and whole.

Most translations of Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer use the word *debts*, while in Luke's version they use the word *sins*. The New English Bible speaks of *wrongs*. *The Prayer Book*, from which many pray in public worship, uses the word *trespasses*. All these translations are illuminating and interchangeable, providing different facets of the same truth.

Debts: Though we may think we are reasonably free from creditors or obligations to other people who have done us "favors," we are nevertheless indebted to God for our very existence! The truth of the matter is that we live in a world of interdependency with others and with God. Our debts (responsibilities) toward our neighbor and toward God form a

network of debts. We owe so much more than we can ever repay that our humble prayer must be "forgive us our debts."

Sins or Wrongs: Those things we have done which were morally wrong, the breaking of God's law.

Trespasses: Going against God, violating his will. Going against persons, violating their personal rights. To trespass means to go where we "don't belong," to pass over "land" that isn't open to us.

Whatever word we use, the truth is that no person can pay his or her debt to God, no person can *forgive* his or her own sins, no person can *make right* his or her trespasses. It is the very nature of forgiveness that it has to come from beyond us, from another person or from God, from the one we have hurt, sinned against, from the one we have trespassed against, from the one we owe. Forgiveness has to come from beyond us, and it has to be given freely. We don't pay for it, but Jesus said we are to pray for it.

Sin is separation from God; forgiveness is reconciliation with God. The amazing truth of the gospel is that forgiveness is ours. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19, RSV).

To pray ought to mean that we open ourselves to receive the forgiveness of God. Again, here is the truth we emphasized yesterday: God is the *giver*. He wants to give good gifts to his children. He wants us to receive the forgiveness he offers.

Yet, we don't. We remain separated from God because we will not receive his gift of forgiveness. We want to *do* something to *earn* it. We want to *make things right ourselves*. So, in our struggles we remain separated.

Ponder this for a few minutes: GOD HAS ALREADY FORGIVEN YOU. The necessary movement on your part is to accept that forgiveness. Accepting God's forgiveness will lead us to *repentance*. So overwhelmed by the love and acceptance of God, we will be truly sorry for our debts, our wrongs, our sins, our trespasses. Forgiveness brings repentance.

Accepting God's forgiveness will lead us to seek to *make right* our wrongdoing. It will make us want to seek reconciliation with our neighbor. It will cause us to desire to rectify our past. Zacchaeus experienced this forgiveness and said, "The half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold" (Luke 19:8, RSV).

So Jesus ties two movements together: "Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors." Receiving forgiveness is dependent upon having a forgiving spirit. Could it be that this is the reason forgiveness is often unreal in our lives? We are unable to receive forgiveness because we do not have a forgiving spirit. We have not forgiven others. This was so important to Jesus that he stressed the truth in his parable of the two debtors (Matthew 18:21 ff).

Peter asked Jesus, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?" Jesus responded, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven." Then he told the parable of the two debtors. Out of the largeness of his heart, the king canceled the debt of one of his servants. This lucky servant then turned on a fellow-servant and demanded that a paltry sum be repaid. When it wasn't, rather than extending the kind of forgiveness he had experienced from the king, the forgiven servant had his fellow-servant thrown into a debtor's prison. Hearing this

news, the king reversed his judgment and threw the ungrateful servant into jail.

Jesus concluded that parable with this tough word: "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart" (Matthew 18:35, RSV).

There are wide-ranging implications here. Primarily, though, Jesus is undergirding with this parable what he taught us about praying: "Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors."

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Go back and reread what was said about those three facets of the same truth: *debts*, *sins* or *wrongs*, and *trespasses*. Be specific in confessing in the space below how they are expressed in your life.

Debts:

Sins or Wrongs:

Trespasses:

Forgiveness is a gift of God. We are open to receive it as we have a forgiving spirit. Are there persons who have wronged you that you need to forgive? Who are they, and for what are you holding them *guilty*?

Forgiveness is a gift of God. Often God's forgiveness can be real in our lives only as we *forgive ourselves*. Are you carrying a burden of guilt because you have not yet forgiven yourself? Think about that. If it is true, admit it and pray something like,

Lord Jesus, I accept your forgiveness, but I confess that I have not forgiven myself. Today I forgive myself for (fill in the blank here with whatever it is for which you need to forgive yourself)

3

I know that you accept me. Now help me to accept myself. Don't let me fall back into self-condemnation again. Amen.

During the day

You made a list of the persons you need to forgive, with whom you need to be reconciled. During this day, at least begin the process of reconciliation—a telephone call, a letter, a personal contact, anything to show your "forgiving spirit," in order that you might feel the freedom of forgiveness in the whole of life.

Last week in our emphasis on "if two of you shall agree," you were asked to find a prayer partner. You may want to talk to that person again about this need to forgive and be reconciled.

DAY SEVEN

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

On the left below is the Lord's Prayer as we commonly pray it in public worship. We have been living with this prayer for a week now. We are beginning really to make it our own. Write your own prayer, using your words and following this model, in the column beside Jesus' instruction.

Pray then like this:

Our Father who art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come,

Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

And forgive us our debts
As we forgive our debtors;

And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.

The logic of Jesus continues to be clear in the Lord's Prayer.

"Forgive us . . . as we forgive." We are forgiven—our mountainous debts that we owe to God, the wrongs that we have done, the sins we have committed in thought, word, and deed. With amazing grace, in unlimited mercy, God loves and forgives us, accepts us, and marks the account "settled."

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." This follows naturally the petition to be forgiven. We not only need God's forgiveness for what has been; we need God's protection against what may come.

What a strange petition, "Lead us not into temptation"! Why should we have to ask God not to lead us into temptation? Certainly this prayer is more than a plea to be excused from the various trials and tempting opportunities which promise us life but grant us failure and abandonment.

3

Christian life, as the cross shows us, is participation in and not exemption from the trials and tempting opportunities of life. This petition does not say, "excuse us from life's temptations"; rather, it is a plea that we shall not be abandoned during our wrestling with deceiving powers and opportunities. It is the feeling of abandonment and despair which makes temptation so fearful. So we pray not to be led into the ultimate consequence of temptation, that sense of having been "taken" and now abandoned. We are to claim Paul's promise that no tempting power, "neither death nor life . . . nor powers, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39, RSV).

" . . . but deliver us from evil." Like the petition "lead us not into temptation," this one is not a prayer for special treatment from God, as though he could prevent evil from coming our way. Rather, the petition is about handling the very real evil we all experience. We pray to be delivered, and that's not the same as being exempted from evil. Deliverance is liberation, being freed from the threat that evil can ultimately destroy us. Notice this: It is liberation for everyone, not just the faithful or the righteous—"Deliver us," not "Deliver those who pray or those who attend church regularly." Are we prepared to pray this petition seriously, to ask God for the deliverance and liberation of everyone, including those we may be oppressing and afflicting with evil (by indifference, greed, pride, or feelings of superiority)? What changes would we have to make in our lives and relations with others if we prayed this petition seriously?

Here is a dimension of prayer and Christian living that is missing from too many of our lives. Too often prayer becomes a response to what has been, rather than an experience of what is and what can be. In praying about temptation and liberation from evil, we look to the God who calls us forward to meet these challenges. We lay claim to the *living Christ* who is a continuing part of our experience and yet is ahead of us, encouraging us on.

Jesus invites us to give ourselves to him and to allow his matchless energy to be the power of our living.

I am the true vine . . . Abide in me, and I in you . . . you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit.
(John 15:1-5, RSV)

Our praying and our living will never be the vital vibrant experience that it can be until we grasp this. Abiding in Christ, allowing his spirit to live in us, is our source of power. Allowing his *life* to live in us, we pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

The gospel is the good news of the Deliverer. The Deliverer is Christ. He is on our side in our struggle against any power that would tempt us to sin or would seek to destroy us. He is God's answer to our prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Get the symbol of the vine and the branches in your mind. All the branches are linked to the vine. The branches are dependent upon the vine for life itself. The fruits upon the branches are brought to birth, fed,

and brought to fulfillment (ripened) by the life that comes through the vine.

See yourself as a branch, with Jesus as the vine, abiding in him and he in you. Write a prayer about what that means to you, and how you will seek to live it out.

During the day

Some think it too simplistic to confront problems and temptations with the question, "What would Jesus do?" Yet, guidance can come in that fashion. Perhaps a better way to think of it is: "If I am truly a branch of his vine, if I am abiding in him, and he in me, where should I go, what should I do, how should I respond today, in this situation, with this person?" Add to that the fact that abiding in him, his power becomes your power. Therefore, you do not face problems and temptations alone.

Keep this vision in your mind throughout the day. Carry the Deliverer with you as God's answer to your prayer, "Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me and all of us from the evil we afflict on each other."

GROUP MEETING FOR WEEK THREE

Needs for group work:
chalkboard or newsprint.

INTRODUCTION

Feedback is necessary to keep the group dynamic working positively for all participants. The leader should be sensitive to this. Persons should be encouraged to share their feelings about how the group is functioning. You may want to begin this session by asking for feedback.

Checking meaning by feedback is also essential for communication. We often mis-hear what a person is saying. A simple practice of feeding back to the person what you have heard (i.e., "I hear you saying that you feel guilty because you have to *force* yourself to pray. Is that it?") will enhance communication.

This has significant meaning in prayer. We want to know that we are being heard. To be heard by our friends may be the first step in our experience of God as a friend who really hears! So, each of us, then, should practice listening, also feeding back to check meaning in order that our fellow prayer-pilgrims may know that we really hear. It takes only one or two persons attempting this kind of serious listening to set the mood for the entire group.

With Christ in the School of Prayer 2

DAY ONE

"When you pray . . . go into a room by yourself."

When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; they love to say their prayers standing up in synagogue and at the street-corners, for everyone to see them. I tell you this: they have their reward already. But when you pray, go into a room by yourself, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is there in the secret place; and your Father who sees what is secret will reward you.

(Matthew 6:5-6, NEB)

We began this adventure by saying that ultimately the Holy Spirit is the great Teacher. God is the beginning and end of prayer. Since Jesus is the revelation of God, we can look to him as the revealer of a life of prayer, and also as the teacher who has God's unique instruction for us.

Because prayer was such an important part of Jesus' life, it is no wonder that he had some strong directives about it in his Sermon on the Mount. He spoke about prayer on many occasions, but Matthew indicates the essentials of his teachings were set forth at the beginning of his public ministry.

When you pray, go into a room by yourself, shut the door and pray to your Father who is there in the secret place.

It is clear from this word of Jesus that prayer is a personal matter. It is the communication that goes on between God and me. The emphasis here is upon *solitude*.

Now there is a difference between being alone and being alone *with God*. Even in the hectic, crowded conditions in which many of us live, most of us are often alone. Jesus is urging us to choose aloneness, to find solitude for a purpose: to be alone *with God*.

If we are going to have a life of prayer, Jesus is insistent that we must go into our room, shut the door, and be alone with God. To be alone with God is creative, purposeful solitude. This doesn't mean that we have to be behind a physical door to meet this condition. The emphasis is upon privacy and the deliberate effort on our part to be with the Father "who is there in the secret place."

Jesus knew that the ultimate struggle takes place in the private recesses of the self. Our wrestling with "principalities and power" (Ephesians 6:12) may indeed become a social or political battle. But we never get to that battle and *stay with it* unless we engage in the struggle within.

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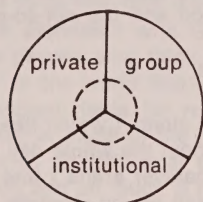
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Yesterday we thought about prayer as relationship. We learned that we choose our name for God by what he means to us. In Jesus' wisdom, he knew that our nature is such that when we are with others, with the exception of those we love and trust most, we are tempted to pretend, to be less than honest, to play to our audience. When we are alone, we don't need to pretend. So we must go further to say that not only do we name God as he is for us, we name ourselves as *we are* before him.

The American Baptist Evangelism Team has suggested a model, dealing with personal decision for Jesus Christ, which also assists us in naming ourselves as we are before God.



The person is the dotted line at the intersection of the private/group/institutional arenas. Personal decision for Jesus Christ, therefore, means accepting him into the totality of one's private life, into one's groups (particularly family), and into one's institutional roles (as citizen or worker).

Our relationship to God is tremendously affected by the institutional and group realities of our existence. What we are as a citizen or worker, what we are as mother or father, son or daughter, what we are as a member of a political party or civic club are powerful dimensions of the "self" we are as we come to God in prayer.

God cannot and does not relate to what we are not. I don't mean that God can't break in upon our lives in any fashion, and at any time he chooses. He does cut through our falseness, our counterfeit personalities, to bring us to judgment about our deception. Yet, a living prayer relationship with God comes when we dare to "level" with God. When someone will not allow you beyond the very superficial levels of his or her life, there is little or nothing you can say. You only make "small talk." Likewise, when we present only a fictitious personality to God, when we pretend something we aren't, there is no real *presence* with which God can be truly present.

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

You have "closed the door" now. God wants to be present with the real you. Before God now, in his presence, look at yourself, and name yourself before God. If you are like me, you have many names. You are "legion": giant/weakling, hero/coward, laughter/cryer, reconciler/fighter, lover/hater, listener/talker, self-giving/selfish, sinner/saint. All the dimensions of the inner self are expressed in the private, group, and institutional arenas.

Spend some time *naming* yourself alone before God. Record five or six expressions of the "legion" you are.

Many of these expressions of ourselves are determined by the institutional, group, and private sectors of our living. Review the names you have given yourself and note by each the sector (institution, group, private) which influences this expression of your being.

2

In dedicating ourselves to God, he accepts us as we are. We need, therefore, to give our total selves to him—the good and the not-so-good, the positive and the negative.

Pray something like this as you close this period.

God, thou art *my* God. Thank you for this time alone. I would like to have your presence as vivid as this throughout the whole day. Help me to know that you are with me, in whatever arena I find myself, even as I am, and that your strength can be my strength. And God bless (write in first names of those with whom you are sharing this adventure):

May they be strengthened by your Presence.
Amen.

During the day

Create some minutes within your routine today to recall this time when you were in solitude with God.

DAY TWO

"When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites."

Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one was a Pharisee, the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed like this with himself, "O God, I do thank thee that I am not like the rest of mankind, greedy, dishonest, impure, or even like that tax collector over there. I fast twice every week; I give away a tenth part of all my income." But the tax collector stood in a distant corner, scarcely daring to look up to Heaven, and with a gesture of despair, said, "God, have mercy on a sinner like me." I assure you that he was the man who went home justified in God's sight, rather than the other one.

(Luke 18:10-14, Phillips)

of the stage. Jesus urged us not to be "like the play-actors" who pray to impress others. Prayer is relationship. It is primarily communication between one person and God.

Two days ago we made the distinction between simply being alone, and being alone *with God*. We are not necessarily better persons when we are alone, only more genuine perhaps. The result of being alone and naming ourselves before God is that we can level about ourselves with God and with others. Solitude is thus preparation for more honest relationship and more deliberate participation with others and the world. So Jesus insists that our growth in prayer, our growth in relationship to the Father, is dependent upon that time alone with him.

In our aloneness with God, Jesus says, "Don't rattle off long prayers like the pagans who think they will be heard because they use so many words." In the world that Jesus knew, the "gods" of the people were remote, unpredictable, far removed from the affairs of earth. Prayer for the most part, in much of the religious practice of that day, was the effort on the part of an individual to win attention. So one made a lot of noise, rattled on and on. Such is not necessary; in fact, it's repulsive to God, said Jesus. God is near—as near as breathing. He hears our longings even before we put them into words. He "knows your needs before you ask him."

This does not mean that Jesus was against using words in prayer. Nor was he against asking God to meet our needs. On many occasions he poured his longings out to God and petitioned God in specific terms. Here he is making the important point that *it is not God who has removed himself from us, but we who have removed ourselves from him*.

The nearness of God, if we have the grace to grasp it, will transform our praying and our living. His nearness makes all conversation with him intimate.

That means prayer can be a renewing and strengthening experience. When we are honest, most of us will admit that we are not nearly as strong as we sometimes think we are and often pretend to be. A word of ridicule, the turning away of a friend, an unexpected illness, even minor failures, not to mention *big* failures and tragic happenings shatter our confidence. Even as practicing Christians this happens. We think our confidence in God is great enough to keep us strong in faith and commitment, but these threats to our security explode the thought that we are mature in our faith.

So, we come to God regularly, not to "rattle off long prayers," but to spend time in reflection, simply to be alone with him and to gain perspective for living.

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

1. Look back over the past week. Have there been times when your confidence was shattered? Were there times when you realized that you were not as strong as you pretended to be? Did you share that experience with anyone? Did you deliberately share it with God?

2. Do you know yourself as accepted as you are, rather than through the

actions you perform or the masks you wear? Name three persons who accept you as *you really are*.

2

3. When the levels of human support fail, do you believe that God does actually sustain you, that he does provide strength? Recall two experiences when you felt God's strength vividly in your life. Record those experiences briefly here.

Here is a great promise upon which we can depend.

They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

(Isaiah 40:31, RSV)

In my prayer life I find it very meaningful to memorize such beautiful passages. You may also find such a practice meaningful. If so, memorize this verse, or concentrate on it as you deliberately wait in silence for a few minutes for God to give you perspective and strength for the day ahead.

During the day

Think now of the most difficult situation you might encounter today. It may be a task to perform, a personal encounter you anticipate, a decision you must make. Say *aloud* now, "God will be with me in that situation. No matter what happens, he is going to sustain me." When you approach that situation, remind yourself of this fact and remember the promise of the verse upon which you have been meditating: "They that wait upon the Lord. . . ." (This verse is printed on page 137. You may wish to clip it and carry it with you so that you may refer to it often.)

DAY FOUR

"When you pray . . . your Father who sees what is secret will reward you."

Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel,

"My way is hid from the Lord, and my right
is disregarded by God"?

Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God, the
creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary, his under-
standing is unsearchable.

He gives power to the faint, and to him who has
no might he increases strength.

Even youths shall faint and be weary, and
young men shall fall exhausted;

but they who wait for the Lord shall renew
their strength,

they shall mount up with wings like eagles,

they shall run and not be weary,

they shall walk and not faint.

(Isaiah 40:27-31, RSV)

Did you carry that promise with you yesterday? What about your most difficult situation? Did you feel any differently going through it, and after it was over? Spend a minute or two thinking about whether spending time alone with God prior to such an experience makes any difference.

Jesus said, "When you pray . . . shut your door and pray to your Father privately. Your Father who sees all private things will reward you." To be alone with God is necessary because, as we considered yesterday, we do need strength that is not our own. Our own, and other human support, is not enough. When we fail, when we don't make it or are turned off by others, we need to know that there is *Another* who can survive humiliation and failure and can help us survive.

In your recording yesterday, you listed two experiences when you felt God's strength vividly in your life. The truth is, there have been many experiences when such strength was not vivid. Isn't it true that the degree that we feel his presence and power in the daily affairs of life is dependent upon the degree that we share with him *alone* in our "private room" or in the private company of our prayer group or partner?

As we grow in our prayer life, we will come to experience more and more what Jesus meant when he said that the Father "will reward you." Certainly we realize that we do not pray in order to be rewarded. We also realize that God does not "play favorites" and reward the righteous while abandoning the lost. In fact, the story of Job tells us that often the righteous fare much worse than the sinners. We learn the same from the cross! Perhaps we will be better off to consider the "rewards" of prayer as the natural *consequences* of praying. Just as every other act has its consequences, so does the act of prayer. So plant this fact firmly in your mind and heart: *The God with whom we can communicate is capable of answering our prayers.*

The writer to the Hebrews encourages us here: "Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him" (Hebrews 11:6, RSV).

At this early stage of our journey in prayer, three "consequences" need to be acknowledged and emphasized.

1. The consequence ("reward") of *God's presence*. God is always present, but the end of all praying is to know the presence of God within our lives. All sorts of consequences flow from this greatest of all gifts of God.
2. The consequence ("reward") of *power*. Our emphasis yesterday was on this fact: God makes available to us a power not our own.
3. The consequence ("reward") of *guidance*. Prayer, being alone with God, opens our lives to the guidance of God. By its very nature, prayer encourages a *receptive mood*.

François Fénelon, one of the spiritual giants of all centuries, has written a prayer that will assist you in waiting in your secret place for the God who will reward you openly.

Lord, I know not what I ought to ask of Thee; Thou only knowest what I need; Thou lovest me better than I know how to love myself. O Father! give to Thy child that which he himself knows not how to ask. I dare not ask either for crosses or consolations: I simply present myself before Thee, I open my heart to Thee. Behold my needs which I know not myself; see and do according to Thy tender mercy. Smite, or heal; depress me, or raise me up: I adore all Thy purposes without knowing them; I am silent; I offer myself in sacrifice: I yield myself to Thee; I would have no other desire than to accomplish Thy will. Teach me to pray. Pray Thyself in me. Amen.⁴

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Fénelon's prayer is over two hundred years old. The language may be clumsy for you, but the "heart" of prayer is there. Go back over the prayer, slowly and deliberately. Then try to make it your own by rewriting it in your own words in this space.

During the day

Dwell on this verse; embed the promise in your mind. "Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." This verse is printed on page 137. If you have not memorized it, you may wish to clip it and carry it with you today as a reminder that the consequences of your prayer relationship with God are his *presence*, his *power*, and his *guidance*.

DAY FIVE*"Ask and it will be given you. . . ."*

Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

(Matthew 7:7-8, RSV)

Or what man of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

(Matthew 7:9-11, RSV)

There is no more expansive declaration about prayer than this word confronting us in the Gospel of Matthew. Nothing could have been bolder. All the resources of God himself are available to his children who will enter into a praying relationship with him. Since this is such an extravagant promise, stop now and immerse yourself in verses seven and eight printed above. To memorize these verses will be meaningful to many.

Those who have barely entered the door of Christ's "school of prayer" may grab hold of this promise and begin to besiege the Father with all sorts of requests. That's OK, provided we don't reduce God to some sort of cosmic Santa Claus who is at the beck and call of selfish children. I personally believe that we should talk to God about anything we *feel* is important to us. I believe we should petition God for any gift we *think* we need. Anything that is important to us is important to God. Talking to God about any and everything helps us in finding our way to a life of prayer.

The important thing is that we keep on talking with him, keep on bringing our desires and longings to him until we are clear in our own thinking about our needs. God does not grant us our "wish-list"; he does meet our needs and fulfill our longings.

The power of the promise, "Ask; and it will be given you," lies in the loving relationship between us as children and God as our Father. When we live in that relationship we learn the spirit of the Father, we come to know his will, we act as a part of the "family" (the kingdom), we seek and find. So Jesus added that second word: "What man of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (Matthew 7:9-11, RSV).

We need to get firmly in our minds now the truly expansive power available through a prayer-relationship with God. As we grow in the relationship, we will understand the conditions and boundaries which guide our use of God's power (that is, we can't seek to use this prayer power in ways God himself wouldn't use it). We will then begin to comprehend the *wisdom* of God in what appears to be unanswered prayer.

Here's what the gospel challenges us to recognize: Don't underestimate the power of God that comes to us through prayer. Don't set arbitrary limits on God. Don't box God into the confines of your present knowledge and imagination. Above all LET GOD BE GOD! Let God determine where he is bounded (for example, he has set some boundaries in making you a free creature, capable of acting for or against him). Remember, "how

much more (than we can comprehend with our human experience and reasoning) will the Father give good things to them who ask him!"

The big meaning here is that too often we add more limits to prayer than God does. God's answers to prayer are always better than our asking. He is always more ready to hear than we are to pray.

2

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

What are the three boldest requests you ever made to God? Record them here.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

Look back at those requests and ask yourself these questions about them.

Did you really believe that your requests would be granted?

Were they?

Were these bold requests consistent with what you believe God would want for you?

What happened in your life as a result of your having received, or not having received, your requests?

Stay with this examination of your bold prayer requests for five or ten minutes.

Now, list the three boldest requests you would like to make of God today. You don't have to share these with anyone. They are your private property. Be honest and be free.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

In closing, pray a prayer like this: "Lord, I'm trying to believe your great promise. I don't know all that it means, and how it can operate in my life. But I believe in you and that your will for me is good. Help me to begin to accept for myself, this very moment, all that you are seeking to give me. Amen."

During the day

You may have memorized the extravagant promise of Jesus recorded in Matthew 7:7-8. Take it with you during the day. (It is printed on page 137 for you to clip and carry with you.) Repeat it often. Call it to mind especially when you may be confronted with difficulty and a need to pray.

DAY SIX

"If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed. . ."

If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.

(Matthew 17:20, RSV)

Both Mark (11:23) and Luke (17:5-6) record a similar saying of Jesus about "faith as a grain of mustard seed. . . ." This word is as expansive and as extravagant as the one we considered yesterday: "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."

Obviously, Jesus is emphasizing *faith*. Faith is one of the chief elements required to mobilize the answer to our prayers. The New Testament is filled with this emphasis of Jesus.

Your faith has made you well.

(Matthew 9:22, RSV)

O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.

(Matthew 15:28, RSV)

2

Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.

(Mark 6:34, RSV)

Go your way; your faith has made you well. And immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.

(Mark 10:52, RSV)

And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

(Luke 7:50, RSV)

On one occasion we hear the disciples asking Jesus why their prayers had been ineffective, and Jesus said plainly, "Because of your lack of faith" (Matthew 17:20). He attributed the failure of his power in his own country to the people's unbelief (Matthew 13:58). Here is a rather startling thought to consider: *Jesus put emphasis upon our faith as the condition of appropriating God's love and power. That love and power is always there, unconditionally, but faith receives it and puts it to work.*

Here is that emphasis in its boldest expression. "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you." Concede, if you wish, that Jesus was speaking poetically as he often did, and that the moving of a mountain was not to be taken literally. Even so, the truth is there. I like the way Lewis MacLachlan put it.

If we understand the mountains to be mountains of difficulty or of temptation, or barriers to liberty, this striking figure of speech must be allowed its due significance. At the least Jesus is saying that very great hindrances can be removed by faith, that faith is a power that can take up quite insurmountable obstacles and lift them from our path, that it can change the whole landscape for us, that it can make possible what looks impossible. If this is a metaphor it is a big metaphor, and must have a big meaning.⁵

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

We need to remember, as we stated yesterday, that too often we impose more limits on prayer than God does. God's answers to prayer are always better than our asking. He is always more ready to hear than we are to pray.

The bold promise of Jesus considered yesterday, along with this equally bold affirmation today, must be considered in the context of the total message of Jesus concerning our relationship to God. To be in a relationship of faith that results in answered prayer is to be willing to entrust ourselves to him, to give ourselves to his will for our lives, to put ourselves in his care, to follow his guidance in all the affairs of our lives.

When this kind of trusting faith is the soil out of which our praying grows, mountains *will* be moved. In light of this understanding of faith, look again at the two sets of bold requests you have made—those of the past, and those you recorded yesterday. Is there a difference in the two lists? How did the requests on your first list fit into your ongoing trusting commitment to God? What about the second list, the boldest requests you are making of God in the present? Do they fit into a trusting relationship and commitment to God?

When you have thought about these last questions for a few minutes, write a brief prayer expressing where you are right now in relation to God. Ask him to make you bolder in your trusting him, and in your prayers.

During the day

Since praying and trusting God are inseparable, be especially attentive to how you relate your life to God today. Are you going it alone? Are you calling on God just in times of desperation? Are you worrying about things that you should commit to God? Are you making decisions without thought of his will? Especially ask these questions in relation to your *group* and *institutional* roles which you examined on day one of this week.

DAY SEVEN

"If two of you shall agree. . . ."

Prayer is one of the primary channels through which the power of God is set loose in the world and in our individual lives. Jesus was bold in his affirmation of the unlimited possibilities that are ours through faith. "Hopefully," our minds are expanding to claim the promises he offered.

Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

(Matthew 7:7, RSV)

If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.

(Matthew 17:20, RSV)

Of course, we can't get our minds around such expansive promises in a short time. What excitement will be added to our praying when we pray even out of a *longing* to appropriate this expansive faith.

So, while your mind is yet staggered by these promises, here is still more good news from Jesus:

If two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

(Matthew 18:19-20, RSV)

2

Here is a dimension of prayer that we have not yet considered in this adventure: *praying with others*. Jesus was insistent that we find solitude and be alone with God. Here he is saying that the mind and will of God come to us when we pray with others.

"If two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven." Doesn't that boggle your mind? The implication here that we need to concentrate upon is *the focus that can come to our praying when we share with another or with a group*. Many times when we pray alone, it is difficult to sift our selfish desires from our real needs, difficult to keep clear our seeking the will of God rather than our own wills. Our overwhelming desires need to be examined, even somewhat suspiciously, lest they conflict with the fundamental desires of the heart. It is only the satisfaction of the deepest desires of the human heart which can bring fulfillment.

So we pray with another or a group, to *test ourselves* as it were, to get help in sifting through and sorting out the longings and desires that clamor for satisfaction and fulfillment.

Are any of these needs, longings, or desires so deep, so important, maybe even so desperate, that you would like to find a prayer partner to "agree" with you in making specific petitions to God?

Who will that partner be? If your spouse is sharing this adventure, he or she should be your partner. If your spouse is not sharing this adventure, you probably will want to find someone who is. If you are not related to a group in this adventure, find a trusted person: pastor, wife, husband, or friend. Share with that person this bold promise of Christ, and how you are seeking to find guidance in your praying. Be confident that Christ will honor the promise to be present with you, and that God will answer your prayer.

Right now, pray for guidance in selecting that person. When you have decided (and you don't have to decide right now), make plans to be with that person as soon as possible in order to share this prayer experience. When that happens, come back to this space and record your feelings.

During the day

Each day many of us have brief meetings with persons with whom we can share what is going on in our lives. Today, when you encounter such a person, tell him or her about this adventure in prayer. Share this intriguing promise of Jesus: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Ask them what this means to them, if they believe it, and how it could affect your lives together.

If you do not meet with such a person with whom you can be that specific, perhaps you will find someone with whom you can share something like this: "John/Jane, I'm doing an experiment in prayer. . . ." Tell them something about it, then ask something like: "What do you think about prayer? Have you had any experience that would be helpful to me?" Let the conversation go where it will without it being an embarrassment to, or pressure upon, anyone.

will also serve the practicing preacher whose background in homiletics is spotty or out-of-date, or whose preaching needs strengthening in some specific area.

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I. WHAT IS LIBERATION THEOLOGY?

The North American theological scene has a tendency to latch on to key words and phrases, as if their use were proof that one is up to date. A few years ago it was "secularity." Later it was the "death of God." Today it is "liberation." Preachers of all shades of opinion speak of liberation. Every ecclesiastical assembly seems to feel compelled to include it in its pronouncements. It would seem that one cannot go wrong as long as one is for "liberation."

But words, like coins, lose their sharpness when they are overused. At that point, all sorts of counterfeits are possible. This became clear when the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America was preparing for the Bishops' Conference which took place in Puebla in 1979. At that point, many of the most belligerent opponents of liberation theology employed the strategy of coopting the term "liberation" and interpreting it in their own conservative fashion.¹ Therefore, before we proceed to deal with the subject of liberation preaching, we must clarify what is meant in this context by "liberation theology."

POWER AND POWERLESSNESS: A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

When we speak here of "liberation theology," we are referring to theology done from the perspective of those who have been traditionally powerless in society and voiceless in the church. In the United States, this means blacks, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and

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others. In Latin America, Asia, and Africa, it means those who have long been the subjects of colonialism, economic and political as well as ecclesiastical. In societies which worship youth, it means the aged. All over the world, it means women.

There is a growing number of people in these groups who have rejected the self-image imposed on them. If one takes as an example the case of international colonialism, it has been shown that the colonizers need to justify their enterprise by developing a theory of their cultural superiority, and selling that view to the colonized. For a while, overwhelmed by the power of the colonizers, generations of the colonized may believe what they are told about themselves—their lack of responsibility and organizational skills, their emotionalism, their lack of cultural creativity, etc. But eventually, through a process which takes different shapes in various situations, they come to the realization that they do not have to accept the self-image which has been imposed on them by the colonizers.² This process, which has spelled the death of the international colonial empires of the nineteenth century, is also taking place in societies such as ours among those who have been those societies' internal colonies—blacks, chicanos, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and women. It is on the toil of such people, and of the colonized overseas, that the great wealth of the North Atlantic has been built. And yet those people receive the smallest share of that wealth. Therefore, the change in self-image on their part is not a purely psychological or internal matter, but one which demands basic structural changes in the ordering of our society.

Not all people who have come to this awareness belong to the church. Many have left it because they perceive it as part of the structure of oppression against which they must rebel. And we must admit that such a view is amply justified, when we remember how Christianity was used to take land from Native Americans and then from Mexicans, how it justified slavery, how few Christian leaders protested against the internment of Japanese Americans during the Second World War, and how the Bible has been used to keep women in a subservient role. At the same time, there are many members of these groups who, out of their Christian faith, refuse to join the movement toward a new self-image or to demand their

rights. Many have been taught that it is unchristian to rock the boat or that if they are humble here on earth they will be rewarded in heaven or that they should be content to be of service to others and not claim positions of leadership.

Therefore, not all those who are involved in the various liberation movements can be called liberation *theologians*, for many have rejected all Christian theology as oppressive. Likewise, not all members of these groups who do theology can be called *liberation theologians*, for many simply repeat and reflect what they have been taught by others.

Liberation theology is that done from the perspective of the traditionally powerless as they experience the empowerment of the gospel, not only in an inner sense, but also in the sense that it compels and enables them to strive for justice. In rejecting the traditional interpretation of the Christian message, they refuse to leave the gospel in the hands of the powerful, to be used for their purposes, and insist that a proper interpretation of Scripture is freeing rather than oppressive.

This is not to say that the powerful have deliberately set out to interpret the Bible in an oppressive way. The truth is much more subtle than that. What actually takes place is an unconscious process through which the values, goals, and interests of those in power are read into Scripture.

Take for instance what happened in the early centuries of the Christian church. At first, most Christians belonged to the lower classes. Their opponents said that they were uncouth and unlearned, and that their teaching made no sense. A great deal of the Christian literature of the first four centuries seeks to respond to that challenge by showing that Christianity agrees with the best of Greek philosophy and Roman law. As an effort to communicate the gospel to those outside the church, this response is quite understandable. But what eventually took place was that Christians themselves began to think that Greek philosophy and Roman law spoke a clearer word about God and the divine purposes than did the Bible itself. By the time Constantine came to power, in the early fourth century, and he and his successors embraced Christianity, it was possible to do so without rejecting many of the values of the "best" Graeco-Roman society.

The conversion of Constantine, and the support which most of his successors gave to the church, accelerated the process. Eusebius of Caesarea wrote a *Church History* which made it appear that the only reasons why the empire had persecuted the church were grave misunderstandings and the maliciousness of some rulers—when in fact many of those who led the worst persecutions were among the ablest statesmen and most just rulers who ever governed the empire. The book of Revelation, which spoke of Rome in rather uncomplimentary fashion, was shunned, and Eusebius himself had doubts about its inclusion in the canon of the New Testament.¹ The ritual of Christian worship began to imitate the formalities of the imperial court, with all their distinctions between various levels in the civil hierarchy. Christ was depicted as sitting on a heavenly throne, in a posture which resembled that of the emperors on their thrones. Even the cross was often studded with precious gems. Anything to obscure the fact that the One whom the church worshiped was a poor carpenter from Galilee, who had been condemned to death as an outlaw by Roman authorities.

Again, this was not a conscious process. Indeed, when one reads the documents of the time one comes across repeated protestations that what is being taught and done in the church is exactly what the apostles taught and did. The "faith of the fathers" became the watchword of orthodoxy. But the "fathers" were for the most part seen as bishops who sat on thrones, very much like the Emperor in Constantinople and the images of Christ in heaven.

There were protests against this. The Donatists broke away from the church and eventually were put down by sheer military force. At another level, the development of monasticism was also a sort of protest. Since the church had embraced the values of the surrounding society, these women and men (in Egypt there seem to have been twice as many female monastics as there were male) felt that the best way for them to reject those values was to live in seclusion, preferably in the desert. This feeling was so widespread that soon travelers said that the desert was as populated as a city. Others, while embracing the monastic attitude toward the prevailing values of society, continued their active involvement in the life of the church and often collided with the powerful. These were the great

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The usually unconscious process of adapting Christian teaching to the views and interests of the powerful did not end with Constantine and his successors. It has continued, for instance, in the manner in which the oppression and persecution of Jews has received religious and theological sanction. In the history of the Western Hemisphere it has appeared again and again in the taking of the land from its original inhabitants, in the destruction of ancient civilizations, in the annexation of Mexican territories by the U.S., in black slavery on both continents, etc., etc.

This oppressive use of supposedly Christian doctrine has repeatedly been pointed out. However, what we often fail to realize is that most of the people who did this were sincere in their beliefs. It is not that they consciously decided to interpret the Bible in such a way that it supported exploitation. It is rather that, from their perspective, a different interpretation was highly unlikely. And, since their views were reflected in the centers of authority within the church, their interpretation became normative and was passed on as authoritative, not only to later generations among the powerful, but also to the powerless, who were left with the alternative of either acquiescing to exploitation or rejecting Christianity.

What is happening with the birth of liberation theologies is that many among the traditionally powerless are asking the basic question of whether or not the manner in which the Bible has been interpreted by the powerful is accurate. This is the "ideological suspicion" of which we shall have much more to say later on. Could it not be that a biblical interpretation, so to speak, "from below" would uncover dimensions of the biblical message that have often been ignored?

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UNITY IN OUR DIVERSITY

Using Harvey Cox's 5 C's: Credo (Beliefs), Canon (Sacred Writings), Code (Ethics and Morality), Cultus (Worship Practices), and Corpus (Church and the Congregation), this workshop will attempt to show the varieties within Christianity, and help us understand who we are and how we got to where we are in our spiritual journey. Most of us came out of some church, and for most of us, that church's "way" was normative for us. When we came into MCC, we came with a "laundry list" of expectations; primarily based on our previous church experience and its teachings. Often we found that we were wary of the ways in which others experienced their faith, because it was different from our own. This workshop is an attempt to help us understand, not only where each of us stands, but where we stand in relation to other Christians.

Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson has attempted to do this with her workshop "Vocabularies of Faith." Because I am by training a historian, my way will be to look at the historical perspective and then try to place churches in that perspective, using Cox's method as a schematic tool.

CREDO - OUR BELIEFS

Not all religions have God as an object. Most of us believe that to have a God is essential for the religious person. This is not true in many of the Eastern religions, but when those of us raised in Western culture speak of religion, we mean that religion which claims its authority from God. From 80 to 90 percent of Europeans and Americans when asked, state that they believe in God. Yet, Christians do not always share a common picture of that God. Most would agree that they are speaking of that which is unlimited, unconditioned, un-definable, ineffable, yet capable of being known and loved. God may be named or not named, but all names for God are analogies which define God by going from the known to the unknown. That is, we know what "a father" or "a king" is, and we analogize from that that God is the utmost "father." If we understand a king as a head of a state, then we analogize God as the ultimate "king" or as our Jewish forebears stated, "Praised be the Lord our God, king of the universe." Each of our statements about God work in virtually a similar manner, whether we speak of "the ground of our being," "the source of ultimate good," "the Wholly Other," "the Other who is most near" or any other way in which we can denominate God.

Many Protestants (and some Catholics and Orthodox) have developed a kind of "unitarianism of the second person of the trinity" and equate their personal God with Jesus Christ, so that some Catholics speak of "God dying on the cross," and Orthodox can speak of Mary being theoteka or "the God bearer." Ordinarily, however, most Christians differentiate between the parts of the Godhead, dividing God into three persons, God the Uncreated Creator, Jesus the Christ, and the Holy Spirit which emanates from both God and Christ. Hence, except for a very few Christians, most of us are Trinitarians; that is, we believe in a Triune God., but there are Christian Binitarians and Unitarians, many of whom insist that it is they who are the Orthodox.

Yet, we accept that the Trinity, as such, is an invention of the Church, a convention embraced in the creeds formulated at the early historic councils, but which even the most noncreedal churches recognize as an almost necessary convention.

Our concepts of God vary. Many speak of a changeless God; and then encounter in the Bible a God who suffers and experiences and changes. Some believe in an aloof and remote God, and encounter a God who risks and creates and destroys by involving Godself in history, a God who can be addressed and who speaks personally and lovingly, and is described as a husband with an unfaithful wife, a nursing mother, and a midwife. We reject the idea of an anthropomorphic God, and accept a God who has a countenance, holy arms, and carves us on a palm of the hand. All of our descriptions of God are verbal symbols whether they are found in the rich imagery of the Bible or the philosopher's abstractions.

Having begun with God, most of us believe that our relationship with that God is mediated in some way through Jesus the Christ. Christianity is a religion which centers on the "salvific," that is, it has something important to do with "salvation," whether that salvation is seen as redemption from a deep sense of personal worthlessness and "sin," or as a means of turning aside the wrath of a displeased God, or since Yasha which is the root of Jesus' name suggests the idea of room to breathe, or of space given to a human being for a sense of release or security, salvation can also mean liberation from the "life in the narrows," and freedom from anguish, constriction or distress. One author speaks of salvation as "the wider space." Yet another Hebrew concept is that of redemption, ransoming, or manumission from slavery. Also we believe that there is a connection between "salvation" and Jesus as "savior." In Jesus the Christ there came a new innocence, a kind of knowledge, and pardon, so that one could stand before God free. In some salvific systems, humanity needed the sacramental system of penance and hierarchical mediators to assist in that salvation, along with a system of works to justify oneself before God. For others, only the act of faith in accepting the gift of God, present in Jesus' death on the cross, was necessary for full salvation and justification before God. For Martin Luther, there was a deep sense of unworthiness and sin, and salvation meant forgiveness. For Paul Tillich, on the other hand, the religious quest is not over sin-sickness and bondage, but over estrangement and meaninglessness, and salvation in Christ means reconciliation and impartation of meaning to life. For John Calvin, God had already decided who was to be "saved" and who damned, and God had already chosen those who were to be justified, even before their birth, and by their actions they were living proof of that justification. Those actions seemed to many to be living out the same old legalisms, another list of do's and don't's, which God had foreordained to keep the unsaved and the unsalvageable in their damnation, and if so, why was the act of Jesus on the cross necessary? Were people once more to be enslaved and unsure whether or not they had satisfied God, and what had become of the biblical assurance that Christ's gift of himself represented complete fulfillment of the law? For Calvin, the answer was that the Christ

"in us" led us to obedience, and grace made us willing, even as Luther felt that it was the action of Christ "for us" that justified us. John Wesley looked at Luther's "justification" and Calvin's "obedience" and added the concept of "perfectability." Humanity was on a quest, in Wesleyan terms, for holiness, morality, and sanctification. Wesley spoke of "universal salvation" and for him universal salvation equaled universal opportunity. Through Christ, humanity was free to leave sinfulness behind. Such salvation was sure, for God the Holy Spirit guaranteed it.

For many of the Enlightenment era, the transactional views of sacrifice, penalty, satisfaction and justification were seen as bizarre and enslaving supernatural events, whereas Christ's work was exemplary in a humane world. Liberal theology in the Unitarian (and some Anglican) views pioneered a downgrading of revelation and salvation, and felt that humanity was perfectible by its own agency and needed no outside source. It needed merely to follow the great teachings of Christ and through those teachings and their own efforts they would be acceptable to God because they contained within themselves the already God-given potential for goodness.

Throughout the history of Christianity, there have been groups which have felt that systematic doctrine of any kind was too legalistic and did not allow sufficiently for the working of the Holy Spirit. At the same time that Luther and Calvin were formulating their doctrinal stances, others were either waiting passively and quietly, like the Society of Friends, for the "inner light" to make visible God's meaning, or were actively seeking the immanent presence of the Holy Spirit and following its leading, wherever that led. For some followers of Thomas Munster, it led to running naked in the streets. For others it led to violent shaking (hence the names "Quakers" and "Shakers") and for some in modern days who follow those same guidelines, it led to taking up snakes, being "slain in the Spirit," or other physical manifestations of the presence of the Holy Spirit, including glossolalia. But whatever the outward manifestation, it was accompanied by a conviction of the inward presence of the Holy Spirit and a transformation occasioned by that presence, almost always occurring after having been assured that one was saved by the blood of Christ, and was now being transformed by the action of the Spirit.

For some of the early pietists, the voice of the Spirit was followed even when it led to persecution and being driven from their homelands. For them the inner voice forbade the taking up of arms, unwillingness to serve in the military, and inability to hold the public offices of constable or magistrate, since these might require them to take a human life. That voice led to Separation from the national churches, for the Puritans and Pilgrims, to adopting and keeping the "plain clothes" of the simple people of the time (for the Quakers, Mennonites, Dunkers, and Amish) even until modern days, and the disavowal of infant baptism and the requirement that only regenerate adults could be part of their community.

CANON - THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, THE BIBLE

Christianity is a scriptural religion. Like Judaism, most Christian groups are "people of the book," some more than others, and many with varying attitudes toward that book.

For traditional Catholics, the Bible was only one of many books and histories which had authority. There were in addition to it, books of papal and episcopal authority, martyrology, hagiography, theological interpretation, the magisterial edicts of morality, and devotional literature by the great saints and doctors of the church.

In historical Protestantism, the Bible was the source of authority and a sacred symbol as well. For John Calvin, the Bible was reliable and infallible. The Bible is the word of God, put together by divine guidance. The Bible is the Revelation of God, and if a book of the Bible was ascribed to a certain author, that person, historical or apostolic, must have written it. God, having seen to the writing of the Bible had closed the canon. For Martin Luther, on the other hand, there was always the possibility that something more might be written on the subject, and his canon was always open to that something more. For Luther, the Bible was not infallible, some parts were in error, including some of Paul's mistaken analogies. For Luther, the central idea of the Bible was always God's grace in Christ.

Liberal followers after Luther's ideas have a freer approach to interpretation, stressing not the "letter of the law, but the Spirit." Luther did not originate these ideas, but found them in such early church fathers as Irenaeus, Justin Martyr and Origen. It was the more traditional view of Scripture. Jesus, not the Bible, is the "Word of God" presented in the Bible. The Bible is not the Revelation of God, but the witness to the revelation.

With the Enlightenment, and the rise of rationalism and scientific scholarship, those tools were turned toward looking at the Bible. The miraculous and supernatural were played down, the mystery subordinated to clear reason and the "reasonableness of Christianity" accented. The bible was subjected to higher and lower criticism, textual criticism, and varied forms of scientific scrutiny to provide new names as authors of old books, with computers even being used today to validate whether or not books were written by the authors to whom they were ascribed.

For some this was construed as an "attack" upon the Bible, and there was a voice of revolt from the followers after Calvin's approach, leading to Fundamentalism and reinforcement of literalism. The inerrancy of the Bible, the King James being seen as the textus receptus, and a denunciation of those who used historical and contextual methods to interpret scripture, became the literalists' tools to keep their faithful in the home camp, by frightening their followers into believing that those who used the modern methods were trying in some way to destroy "the Word of God."

Modern Catholics declared a pox on both their houses, and with the scholarship for which the Jesuits were rightly noted, began to do some of the most exciting work in Biblical scholarship, joined later by the Lutherans, while most Protestant scholarship languished, caught up in the war between the liberals and the literals.

CODE - MORALITY AND ETHICS

Religions characteristically make demands upon their followers. Certain norms are set forth, and the adherents of the religious group are measured in light of these. What does it mean to be a "good" Christian? How do Christians live six days out of seven? On the one day, Christians celebrate the rites of passage in connection with the Christian community. Most churches emphasize marriage, child rearing, and promote the thoroughly bourgeois life of the middle class American. The center on teaching children to pray, bringing them to ecclesiastical institutions for religious education, read the Bible to them, supervise their moral development, and counsel them as to their life goals. They prescribe and proscribe human sexual activity, and counsel on questions of sexual morality.

Is this the Christian life? Or does it also deal with how we live with our neighbors, nearby and worldwide. We remind ourselves that as Christians we have a very bad history of anti-semitism, racism, nationalism, sexism, heterosexism, and have, in the names of our various denominations, used our status as Christians to subjugate much of the world to first feudalism and then capitalism, to the detriment of many native populations.

On the other hand, orphanages, hospitals, and other humanitarian institutions often had their beginnings in Christian groups. We give a great deal of our incomes to the church, to charity, and to other causes in which we believe. We spend enormous amounts of money to convert a few people to our denominations worldwide, but very little to encourage indigenous churches.

We speak in our churches of love, Christian liberty, and concern for our neighbor, but more often we are moralistic and legalistic in our ethics. When we encounter a writer who speaks of ethics in a context of love, we are apt to sneer at "situation ethics" and question whether there are any norms? And yet the liberals tend to remind us that what is normative for our culture might not be for another, and what is normative in their culture might be obscene in ours. Always, we tend to look to the Scriptures to be normative for us, and for most Christians, that means New Testament norms, not the Hebrew scriptures, although some Christian groups (like the Seventh Day Adventists) feel that we must accept the whole Bible and not just those parts of which we approve. On the other hand, there were extreme voices (like the Marcionites), which would entirely drop the Hebrew scriptures from the canon, and thereby not even have to question whether those laws held.

For some Christians, ethical behavior meant being willing to die for your country with the blessing of God, for others is meant totally turning the other cheek, as Jesus demanded, and not serving your

country even in times of just wars. They took literally Jesus injunction to "love your enemies, and do good to those that hate you."

While the King James version says "Be ye perfect," other translations read, "Be ye compassionate," and yet our compassion is often outstripped by our self-love. St. Augustine said, "Love God, and do as you please," Luther said, "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all." The paradoxes hold, we must first look to our neighbor's need, and then be a Christ to the neighbor. We must first love ourselves, and love others as ourself. Christianity looks to what is life affirming, and follows the Deuteronomist who said, "I hold out to you this day, life and death, choose life."

Calvin was ever fearful that the claims of the law would be obscured, and that antinomianism would ensue, and held to absolute and uncompromising ethical standards, which the Christian would obey because of the Christ within. Groups which have their beginnings in Calvinism, still have a more legalistic view of ethics and morality.

Radical Christianity responds to Christ's demand for radical love, and placed all reliance on love in human relationships. The goodness of an act depends on one's relationship to God in Christ, and the ability to respond in self-giving love to the neighbor in need. Love equals justice. Love often forces us to decide on the spot between bad choices.

Eventually, the good Christian sets out to please God, not others. Our choice of a moral path is guided chiefly by love of God in Christ and not by observance of law. It is to be worked out in the vocations of forgiven people, whose forgiveness liberates them to face each day free for the other, for whom the prospect of forgiveness is a sustaining force in the face of inevitable failures to live the good life.

CULTUS - WORSHIP

For all Christians, there are two acts which are held above all other acts, for some seen as sacramental, for others as ritual observances and memorials. One is an initiatory rite into the Christian faith, which all but a very few still observe. (The Quakers, for example, do not baptize.) Baptism for most branches of Christianity is the first act of obedience which Christians observe. Anglicans, for example, place the font at the entrance to the church sanctuary, to emphasize its initiatory status. In ancient Catholicism, it retained many sexual symbols, with the font being equated with the womb in which the Christian was reborn. To further emphasize this relationship, a large Pascal candle was plunged into the font, and candle wax dropped into the water. The symbol was endowed with power to regenerate the soul of the participating Christian. Infants in danger of death might be baptized by anyone present, lest their immortal souls be in jeopardy.

For those Christian groups which grew out of national churches (Anglicans, Lutherans, Congregationalists, etc.), all were baptized as infants. The parents covenanted at the ceremony to raise the child as a Christian and the baptised infant might be as young as a few days to a few weeks old. Baptism was not a necessity, and regeneration was not effected by the act, one does not acquire forgiveness in baptism, instead it is the "ingrafting of the child into the body of Christ."

Luther felt that apart from the Word (the trinitarian formula of baptism), the water was simple water and without effect, but with the word, baptism did effect change. The event accomplishes regeneration; the water does not do it, but the word does. He felt that the baptized would be saved. Baptism created faith, it did not wait for faith; it brought forgiveness, and was not a sign of forgiveness.

The Anabaptists understood baptism as the washing of regeneration, and that we are "buried with Christ with baptism unto death, and raised to walk in newness of life." By limiting baptism to regenerate adults, the standard of membership in the churches would be raised, and only believers would present themselves for baptism. Later Baptists felt that the baptism of infants deprived them of the liberty to reject or stand apart from the Christian community, which it has the freedom and soul liberty to do. They further felt that baptism is a sign or seal of an invisible transaction which has gone on between the person and God. The "adult" might be as young as 7 or 8 years of age.

Interestingly, in this day of national churches no longer having the importance they once held, more churches are offering "believer's baptism" to new converts, and immersion is beginning to be offered in almost all churches as an alternative to sprinkling and pouring.

The other rite shared by most Christian groups is communion (the Lord's supper, the Eucharist, etc.) It is a ritualized sacred meal, wherein the "food" becomes more symbolic than real, and the sacredness become more real than symbolic. It is a foreshadowing of the Messianic feast, the bridegroom's banquet, the heavenly table. It is also the table set in the presence of our enemies. Only two things are needed for the feast; one is bread, the other is a cup to hold some liquid (in some groups water, grape juice, or wine is used). Most Catholics believe that the bread and the "wine" literally become the body and blood of Christ (transubstantiation). Others believe with Luther that one receives the body of Christ "in, with and under" the bread and wine (sometimes called consubstantiation, a term which Luther rejected, although he recognized that Christ's presence was localized in them in a way that most Protestants reject.) As in baptism, it was not the bread and wine, but the words which had effective power, to Luther.

Huldreich Zwingli had the most "Protestant" view of the communion. He felt that the bread and cup were only "symbols and signs". The finite was not capable of bearing the infinite. The ordinance was intended to bring about a sense of communion among the participants and intended to be a memorial feast recalling the events and words of Christ's last night with his disciples and his subsequent death and resurrection.

John Calvin believed that God was actually working something through the Lord's supper. Sacraments were outward signs whereby "God sets forth and declares his good will toward us, to uphold the weakness of our faith." To Calvin they were seals or marks of God's power. Calvin, then, had a higher view of the communion than Zwingli and the radical reformers. The signs were rooted in salvation history and were not arbitrary signs. The accent fell on the combination of God's word and human faith. Anglicans tend to fall more with Calvin, and are a little less likely to follow Luther here. John Wesley was a high church Anglican when it came to the communion, and would probably be very uncomfortable in a modern Methodist church communion which would probably be more Zwinglian than his own belief.

In this age of ecumenism, the communion seems to be getting higher and falling more to the liturgical side, just as baptism seems to be falling more toward the evangelical side. Modern churches are finding their own ways through the symbolic acts of worship, and understanding them as symbols, but recognizing the power of symbols to effect what they symbolize.

CORPUS - THE WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

There seem to be three ways of looking at the Christian community and the individual participant in it.

COMMUNAL: (Primarily Catholic) We are members of one another and of the "mystical body of Christ." My body is where there is work to be done.

INDIVIDUALISTIC: (Primarily Evangelical) The emphasis is on Christ as personal savior, "Jesus died for me." This type of religion also seems to set up a spirit of competition, which sets person against person in a quest for material possessions. (Calvinistic belief that God rewards the elect with material success.)

EXISTENTIALIST: There is a lonely agony at the edge of the abyss, with God and the Christian affirmation being the response to the desperate question of God's lonely person.

To look at it historically, Luther felt that there was both a visible and an invisible church. The invisible church was the communion of saints present and those who had gone before in all time. The visible church was the communio sanctorum, the congregation of saints present now. To Calvin, the church was the "mother of the Godly." The true test of the church was the solidarity of its members and their willingness to provide mutual assistance.

Ernst Troeltsch described two types of religious bodies, which he called "churchly" and "sectarian." The churchly type was tied to nationalism (i.e. Lutheran, Anglican, Dutch Reformed, Presbyterian, etc.) and were favored above others by the civil powers. This was the church in continuity, to which all belonged as a birthright, and was the church in the world. The sectarian types were small, radical groups, turning away from the world, demanding high standards of membership. They often had a sense of being beleaguered and besieged

exiles (possibly because they often were). The sects were often Kingdom-centered (not this-world centered), and called to discipling. Fellowship was stressed; they were often pacifist, and membership was by personal decision.

Church polity also varied with the national churches more likely to be hierarchical/Episcopal or presbyterial/synodical. Most churches today are "presbygational," with greater say in calling their pastors than in the very episcopal groups. Sects are more likely to be congregational with total autonomy of the local congregation, but with increasing bureaucratization, even these churches are becoming quasi-episcopal. As the lines are blurring in worship, so they are blurring in polity.

The lay/professional lines are also becoming blurred. Laos means "the whole people of God." There is a descending order of professional/lay division, where the traditional Catholic is the most hierarchical and has a sacramental system dispensed through the clergy. Monastic orders (male and female) are set aside and marked for special regard, since celibacy adds to the special merit of clerical orders. Ordination is a sacrament, and conveys special grace upon the recipient. Ordination is for life whether or not one practices the calling.

Luther felt that there was no separate or special path to salvation for clerics; all life was hallowed, all had a vocation. Zwingli felt that there was no laity, because there were no non-priests. He believed in the priesthood of all believers. Calvin, on the other hand would do away with priestliness. He felt it was a title not a function. He would replace the function with intercession. Among all Protestants, ordination is setting apart to a special function, but does not convey grace, except possibly among the Anglicans, where being "in orders" is closer to the Catholic view.

While the division between laity and professional clergy has blurred, it has not broken down. There is a division of labor, and often laity lacked the expertise that technically educated clerics had. All Christians are able to preach, yet there is a symbolic authority to the pulpit, and "call" in too many churches still means specially trained, ordained males. Calvin was a layperson when he wrote his famous Institutes of the Christian Religion. Professional ministry, on the other hand, requires "call" plus a long and strenuous introduction to theology and pastoral care in most churches. (It takes 96 hours of Master's level courses to earn an M. Div.), followed by ordination examinations, and the laying on of hands. This gives the professionals the right to do what laypeople are enabled to do without it. They can preach, teach, perform the rites of the church, counsel, and help shape church polity. The lay person can preach, teach, perform the rites of the church, counsel, help shape church polity, become involved in the administration of education, become missionary nurses and teachers, serve on vestries, councils, boards and assemblies and other governing bodies, serve in the diaconate, the presbytery, and represent the church at congregational meetings and other assemblies; all of this with only their secular training. In many

denominations there is a shortage of clergy, and clergy tasks are being handled by lay people. Anglicans, on the other hand, if the current trend continues, will have one priest for every lay person by the year 2000, as reported recently.

While this summation, certainly does not totally explain all of Christianity and how we got there, it may make our samenesses and our differences more understandable.

Information condensed from
Protestantism by
Martin Marty
Image Books, Garden City, 1974

Rev. Marge Ragona
November 3, 1990

FROM:

Rosten, Leo: Religions of America (A Look Magazine series), Simon and Schuster, N.Y. 1955.

While **this** book is out of date and does not begin to cover the Black churches, and the Pentecostal groups, it is an excellent source for descriptions of the more traditional groups in America. One can extrapolate from it much information about newer groups as well, if one uses the family chart at the back of the selection, since the beliefs rarely change within families of religious groups over time.

One thing needs to be stated, however, and that is that in the ensuing 35 years, the liberals have gotten more liberal, and the conservatives have become more conservatives, so that the polarization between these groups has hardened into a doctrinal warfare. Yet, as my other paper suggests, liturgically many groups have gotten closer.

M. Ragona

Doctrines and Beliefs

1. What Catholics, Jews, and Protestants Believe: A Comparison Chart *

By STANLEY I. STUBER

Reprinted by permission from the February, 1954, issue of the *International Journal of Religious Education*. Reprints of this chart are available from the National Council of Churches, 79 E. Adams Street, Chicago 3, Illinois.

GOD

Protestants

God is one; manifested as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Protestants believe in a much more individual and direct approach to God than do Roman Catholics. More stress is placed on the love of God, as revealed in Christ, than in a God of law and justice.

Roman Catholics

Supreme Being, infinitely perfect, who made all things and keeps them in existence. God is the only one God, but has three divine Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Revealed through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who teaches through the Catholic Church.

Jews

One God, personal and universal, whose ways are beyond understanding, yet whose reality gives purpose to man and to the world. No one can serve as an intermediary between God and man.

CHRIST

Protestants

Accept Christ as divine Son of God. Believe in direct, personal relationship, rather than through Church institutionalism, including Virgin Mary. He is elder brother, moral leader, as well as Messiah and Savior.

Roman Catholics

Christ is God made man. Born of the Virgin Mary, incarnation of God, atonement for sin, bodily resurrection. Second Person of Trinity. Both man and God. Salvation through his sacrifice on the Cross, manifested in the Mass.

Jews

Many accept Jesus as a child of God, as a Jew, and as a prophet or inspired teacher, with no supernatural powers. They do not accept the Divinity and Atonement of Christ.

ONE TRUE RELIGION

Protestants

Protestantism has never claimed to be the one and only true religion; but that Christ is the only true way to salvation—not the Church. Recognize Roman Catholics and members of the Eastern Orthodox churches as Christians. Desire the same recognition from others.

Roman Catholics

"We know that the Catholic Church is the one true Church established by Christ because it alone has the marks of the true Church." (One, holy, universal, apostolic.) "We know that no other church but the Catholic Church is the true Church of Christ because no other church has these four marks." (*Catechism of Christian Doctrine*)

* The statements listed here are drawn by the author from authentic sources within the faiths concerned, and represent the analysis of each faith by authorities within that faith, not the opinion of one about the others.

Jews

Jews do not claim that their religion alone is the true one. They are content that others have their own faith, as long as it has elements of decency, kindness, justice, and integrity. However, Jews regard *Judaism* as the only religion for Jews.

CHURCH**Protestants**

Protestants believe that the Church belongs to all true Christians, and is a community of forgiven sinners. Christ the only head. Voluntary attendance and financial support. Make a difference between Kingdom of God and the Church as an institution.

Roman Catholics

Christ founded the Roman Catholic Church. It is the Body of Christ. The congregation of all baptized persons united in the same faith, sacrifice, sacraments, pope and bishops. Peter the first pope. Chief attributes of the Church: authority, infallibility, indefectibility. Saving institution represented in papacy and priesthood.

Jews

Jews are permitted to attend Christian churches as visitors, not as worshipers. They have their own synagogues and temples. These are self-governing. Most Jews will join interfaith services when Bible readings, prayers, hymns are acceptable to all concerned.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**Protestants**

No one is automatically born into the Protestant faith. Baptism the usual way to membership. Both infant and adult baptism practiced. Infant baptism followed by confirmation. Stress is placed upon active, not formal, membership.

Roman Catholics

Baptism is the gateway to the Church. Each remains a member (from infancy) so long as he professes the "one true faith"; does not withdraw through schism or heresy, or is not excommunicated.

Jews

Jews are born into Judaism. Converts accepted upon commitment to faith. (Cir-

cumcision the outward sign for males.) Confirmation personal recognition of membership.

BIBLE**Protestants**

Accept Old and New Testaments as inspired, but not *Apocrypha*. Individual right of interpretation. Final authority for faith and life.

Roman Catholics

Inspired Word of God. Interpreted by the Church, which preceded it. 72 books, including *Apocrypha*. Not sufficient guide; tradition of Church added.

Jews

Accept the Old Testament, but not the *Apocrypha* or New Testament. First five books of Moses, called *Torah*, are considered basic to the faith. Wide range of interpretation.

SACRAMENTS**Protestants**

Two: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Wide variation of meaning, from a saving sacrament to mere symbol. Protestants are not "sacramentalists."

Roman Catholics

Seven: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, Matrimony. All instituted by Christ and all give grace.

Jews

No sacraments, but many rites and ceremonies such as circumcision, Bar Mitzvah, confirmation, Reject all imagery.

PRAYER**Protestants**

Honor is paid to saints, but prayers never directed to them. Emphasis placed upon direct approach to God through prayer. No beads or rosary used. Informal, individual prayers encouraged. Worship must be in spirit and in truth.

Roman Catholics

Largely formal prayers not only for themselves personally, but for others (such as those in purgatory). Prayers through Virgin Mary and saints. Use of the rosary as aid to prayer. Not all prayers answered.

Jews

Great stress placed upon prayer: petitions, adoration, confession of sin, expression of joyful fellowship, thanksgiving. Found both in daily personal devotions and in public worship.

SIN**Protestants**

Original sin through Adam usually accepted, and plan of salvation through Christ's death on the Cross. All in need of redemption. But salvation comes through Christ and not Church; forgiveness comes from Christ and not through priest.

Roman Catholics

Original sin due to Adam's "fall." Baptism removes this, but sins after baptism must be removed through penance and absolution of the priest. Sins are carefully catalogued, along with penalties.

Jews

Recognize two kinds of sin: against man; against God. Must seek forgiveness of the first from those sinned against. Sin against God expiated by "a return to God."

HEAVEN and HELL**Protestants**

Believe in both heaven and hell, but not purgatory. Wide differences in interpretation. General belief in some form of punishment for sin, and eternal reward for righteousness.

Roman Catholics

Accept literal heaven and hell, plus temporal place of punishment known as purgatory.

Jews

Most Jews no longer accept any literal conception of heaven and hell. More concerned with leading a good life in this world, rather than reward or punishment in the next (which they do not reject).

EVANGELISM**Protestants**

A basic principle and practice with Protestants, linked closely to church extension, world missions, and salvation.

Roman Catholics

Mostly conducted by the priesthood, although laity now being encouraged to be evangelists and win converts.

Jews

Not a proselytizing religion, although sincere converts are welcomed.

CONFESSION**Protestants**

Confession of sins directed to Christ. He alone has power of forgiveness (along with God). Counseling services of pastors now encouraged, but no absolution.

Roman Catholics

All must go to confession. Confession tied directly to penance and power of priest to forgive sins.

Jews

Confess sins directly to God. Have no intermediary. Day of Atonement on collective as well as individual basis. Personal confession also before marriage and just prior to death.

MARRIAGE**Protestants**

While secular (civil) marriage contract is recognized, the sacredness of the marriage bond is stressed. Love basis of marriage. Beautiful ceremony either at home or church the usual practice.

Roman Catholics

A sacrament binding a baptized man and a baptized woman for life. Parties actually perform ceremony, conferring on each other the sacrament.

Jews

Marriage much more than a personal matter; part of entire Jewish community. Usually elaborate marriage rites and symbols.

DIVORCE**Protestants**

Divorce is allowed under certain conditions such as adultery and wilful desertion, but is held as a last resort. Will remarry the innocent party.

Roman Catholics

Not allowed. Separation permitted. An-

nulment, when there has been "no true marriage," is sometimes granted.

Jews

Divorce is permitted when living together is intolerable. Emphasis on reconciliation and better understanding.

BIRTH CONTROL

Protestants

Not thought of as a sin. Permitted when not abused. May be employed for health purposes.

Roman Catholics

Not permitted under any circumstances by any artificial means, and birth prevention is considered a grave sin.

Jews

Permitted and even advocated when it is for the welfare of all concerned.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

Protestants

Individual supreme; salvation a very personal matter. Priesthood of all believers stressed. Nothing can be substituted for personal responsibility.

Roman Catholics

Roman Catholicism stresses individual re-

sponsibility for sin and salvation, but power is placed in Church and priesthood—not in the individual.

Jews

All Jews completely free as individuals. Rabbis have no authority over individuals. No religious hierarchy.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Protestants

While salvation is thought of as an individual affair, Protestants have always applied their faith in good works to all areas of life. Have responsibility to community. Along with missions goes the desire to build as much of the Kingdom of God into the world as possible.

Roman Catholics

Parents responsible for well-being of children. Taught to love country and obey all laws. Charity basic principle. Social teaching of Pope Leo XIII now championed by Church.

Jews

Have a marked sense of community relationships and service. Charity basic tenet. Inspired by Old Testament prophets. Human rights, freedom, and equality paramount in Jewish practice.

2. Comparison of Religious Beliefs: 15 American Denominations

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This summary-comparison of religious beliefs (of the fifteen denominations whose creeds have been presented in the main body of this book) is designed solely as a cross-reference aid.

The material which follows is not to be construed as representing official doctrine—except where the articles in *Look Magazine*, from which these extracts are taken, were themselves approved by a denomination. Nor does this summary attempt to include the variations in creed and practice of groups within any individual denomination.

The material has been arranged by points of creed or practice: under each point, the position of the religious groups is listed in alphabetical order.

THE BIBLE

Baptists. All Baptists believe in the inspiration of the Bible, but only the extreme fundamentalists accept it literally or regard it as infallible in every

detail. All Baptists accept the Bible as infallible in religious teachings and as a trustworthy record of the progressive revelation of God, climaxed by the supreme revelation of Himself in Jesus

Christ. No official dogma prescribes how an individual Baptist shall interpret the Bible.

Catholics. The Church is the divinely appointed custodian of the Bible and has the final word on what is meant in any specific passage. The Church guards orthodoxy (including interpretation of the Scriptures) and passes down essential Christian tradition from one generation to another.

Christian Scientists. Each person, of any religion, can find what is satisfying to him as the spiritual meaning in the Bible. But Christian Scientists feel that Mary Baker Eddy's book, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, offers the complete spiritual meaning of the Bible.

Congregationalists. The Bible reveals God in a way which will never be superseded. Christ shows that God is love; all subsequent knowledge, imparted to men by God through the Scriptures, merely elaborates this fundamental truth. Congregationalists apply methods of science to Bible study; thus, they feel they know what God is saying in the Bible better than their fathers who lived in a pre-scientific age.

Disciples of Christ. Disciples share the common Protestant belief that the Bible (except for the Apocryphal Books) is the inspired Word of God, written at different times under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Many Disciples accept the New Testament as a third and purely Christian dispensation, following the Old Testament which represents two dispensations.

Fundamentalist Disciples accept the Authorized Version of the Bible as the final and infallible word of God. The liberals believe newer translations and

studies of inspired scholars have thrown new light on many passages of the Scriptures.

Episcopalians. The Holy Scriptures are the great source and testing ground of Christian doctrine. But the Episcopal Church does not hold to the literal inerrancy of Scripture. The Bible is considered sacred for its general inspiration, as the record of God's revelation.

Jehovah's Witnesses. The Bible is followed all the way, not half the way. The Hebrew and Greek Scriptures are considered entirely consistent and practical for our day.

Jews. Orthodox Jews accept the Bible as the revealed Will of God. Reform Jews accept as binding only the moral laws of the Bible. Conservative Jews follow the pattern of traditional Judaism but regard it as an evolving, ever-growing religion.

Lutherans. God's Word is recorded in the Bible, but the Word itself is a living, active thing through which the Holy Spirit stirs us to growth in understanding and obedience to God's will.

Methodists. Methodists look upon the Bible as a library of inspired books containing the progressive revelation of God. They believe in the "open Bible" and encourage the individual to read it for himself, leaving him free to make his own interpretation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

"Mormons." The Bible is basic to "Mormon" belief. The King James version is used officially and is believed "to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly." (8th Article of Faith.) The Book of Mormon is a complementary work accepted by "Mormons" as scripture.

Presbyterians. Presbyterians believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God and "the only infallible rule of faith and practice," and that they are the source of those truths by which men live. They believe that God spoke through men whose minds and hearts He had touched. They therefore emphasize inspired men, not inspired words.

Quakers. Friends have always believed that the Truth is found in the Bible, rather than holding that what has been written is true *because* it is in the Bible.

Seventh-day Adventists. Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible literally and believe that the authors were inspired by God. There have been many translations but the original intent of the authors has come down unimpaired through the centuries, the original message is clearly discernible, and "the word of the Lord endureth forever." The record of creation in the first chapter of Genesis is considered not fable but literal fact.

Unitarians. The doctrine of "revelation," of the absolute and indisputable authority of the Bible, is alien to Unitarian faith and teaching. Unitarians hold the Bible very dear, but they reserve the prerogative of critical appreciation.

CREED

Baptists. There is no single, official creed. The nearest statement is the so-called "Grand Rapids Affirmation," adopted by the American Baptist Convention on May 23, 1946. It resolves that faith be reaffirmed in the New Testament as a divinely inspired record and therefore an all-sufficient rule of faith and practice. It also calls all

its churches to the common task of sharing the whole Gospel with the whole world.

Catholics. The chief articles of faith are summed up in the creeds. There are four great creeds: The Apostles', the Nicene, the Athanasian, and that of Pius IV. Equally essential to Catholic belief are the doctrines and dogmas proclaimed infallibly true by the teaching authority of the Church—e.g., the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, her assumption into heaven after death, the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, and so forth.

Christian Scientists. Christian Scientists have no formal creed. They have six brief religious tenets to which all members of the Church of Christ, Scientist, subscribe. (These are found in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, by Mary Baker Eddy.)

Congregationalists. Each particular congregation is accustomed to write its own creed. A few churches use the Apostles' Creed.

Disciples of Christ. Disciples of Christ have no creed but Christ and no doctrines save those which are found in the New Testament or are reasonably to be inferred therefrom.

Episcopalians. Basic Episcopal beliefs are affirmed in the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed.

Jehovah's Witnesses. The Witnesses have no creed. They follow the Bible completely.

Jews. There is no formal creed. However, the *Talmud* speaks of three central principles in life: Torah—or learning; service of God; and the performance of good deeds, or charity. This represents the core of Judaism.

Lutherans. Lutheran teachings are based on the common Christian faith described in the New Testament and first summarized in the Apostles' Creed.

Methodists. Methodists are not required to sign any formal creed. Those joining the church are asked to affirm allegiance to Christ and the New Testament faith.

"Mormons." Basic Latter-day Saint beliefs are to be found in the "Mormon" Articles of Faith.

Presbyterians. The Westminster Confession of Faith is the creed of English-speaking Presbyterians. Most adherents accept also the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds.

Quakers. There is no written or formal creed. Serving as a substitute are the "Queries," a set of questions designed to encourage the faithfulness of the members in their religious life.

Seventh-day Adventists. Seventh-day Adventists do not make use of a formal creed. They hold certain fundamental beliefs based, they claim, upon the Bible.

Unitarians. Unitarians have no formal creed. Individualistic, they prefer to let every Unitarian speak for himself about his faith.

BAPTISM

Baptists. Baptism is by immersion. It is limited to adults and to such children as have reached an age when they can understand the meaning of the ceremony. Baptists look upon immersion as realistic symbolism, through which the life of sin is buried and the new life of faith emerges.

Catholics. Baptism restores supernatural life. Without that life, man does

not have the capacity to enjoy heaven. Adults may gain the life of grace by an act of perfect contrition or pure love of God ("baptism of desire"). Infants are incapable of such an act of the will; unbaptized babies cannot go to heaven but in their state of limbo do not suffer in any way.

Christian Scientists. Baptism means purification from all material sense and is not practiced in the material form.

Congregationalists. Baptism is the rite by which the Church takes a child or an adult to itself. The mode is usually "sprinkling," though other forms may be used if desired.

Disciples of Christ. Baptism is by immersion as an act of obedience and surrender, a symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Only those who are adult enough to know what they are doing when they stand up to confess Christ are baptized.

Episcopalians. All who are baptized (whether by Episcopalian or other baptism, provided it is with water and in the name of the Holy Trinity) are members of the Church of Christ. Even those who are not actually baptized, but by intention would be baptized if they were able, are believed to be "saved."

Jehovah's Witnesses. Baptism is complete submersion. It is not for infants but for persons of responsible age who have the ability to learn.

Jews. In traditional Judaism, baptism is required only for those converted from another faith.

Lutherans. In baptism a person is born into the Kingdom of God and becomes an heir of salvation.

Methodists. Baptism is usually by sprinkling. It is a sign not only of profession but also of regeneration, or a new birth. The church assumes responsibility for her baptized children and awaits the time when they will be mature enough to appreciate and assume for themselves the vows made at baptism.

"Mormons." Baptism is by immersion and performed by those having authority. It is only for those who have become "accountable" for their actions, by the age of eight years and over.

Presbyterians. Ordinarily performed by sprinkling, this rite is an outward symbol of inward regeneration. While baptism is urgently recommended, it is not held to be necessary for salvation. It is customary to baptize children, but those children who die without baptism are not excluded from heaven.

Quakers. Friends believe in baptism of the Spirit but practice no form of baptism. At birth, the infant's name is recorded on the official books of the meeting to which his parents belong.

Seventh-day Adventists. All who would enter the Church are required to be baptized by immersion, the method followed by the Church of New Testament times.

Unitarians. While many Unitarians do practice baptism of infants and, more rarely, of adults, they prefer to look upon baptism as an act of dedication which has only symbolic meaning. It is possible to become a Unitarian without being baptized.

LORD'S SUPPER

Baptists. Sacraments are regarded by Baptists as simple, dignified ordinances

with no supernatural significance and no sacramental value. The Communion Service is usually observed on the first Sunday of the month.

Catholics. Catholics believe that Christ is truly and substantially present in the Eucharist, body and soul, humanity and divinity, after the priest pronounces the words of consecration in the Mass. The whole substance of the bread becomes the Body of Christ, the whole substance of the wine becomes the Blood of Christ.

Christian Scientists. A Communion Service is held in all branch Churches of Christ, Scientist, twice a year. The communion celebrated is wholly spiritual, without visible elements of bread and wine.

Congregationalists. The Holy Communion is the ritual meal at which Christ is the host, and through which the Church's faith is confirmed and increased.

Disciples of Christ. Disciples hold to the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper. Communion is never omitted from the Sunday service.

Episcopalians. Holy Communion, or Holy Eucharist, is the chief service of worship in the Episcopal Church, though it may not always have chief place in the Sunday service. "The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was ordained for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby."

Jehovah's Witnesses. Witnesses celebrate the Memorial of Christ's death annually on the day corresponding to *Nisan 14* of the Jewish calendar—the day Christ instituted the celebration. They consider it unscriptural to cele-

brate this occasion more often than once a year.

Jews. Jews cannot accept the principle of incarnation. A cardinal tenet of Judaism is that God is purely spiritual; He admits no human attributes.

Lutherans. The Lord's Supper is an encounter of the believer with the living Lord, who is truly present in the Holy Communion to forgive sins and renew the spiritual life of believers. But no physical change takes place in the bread and wine.

Methodists. Methodists do not regard the Lord's Supper as the "real presence" of Christ in body and soul. God is a spirit; the body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten only in a "heavenly and spiritual manner."

"Mormons." The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is administered in a simple manner "in remembrance" of the Savior and as witness that "they are willing to keep His commandments."

Presbyterians. Christ is spiritually and not physically present in Holy Communion. The Sacrament is only a commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ.

Quakers. There is no necessity for any ritual to establish relationship between man and God. Friends believe in all the Sacraments but only in their inward and spiritual revelation of the Divine presence.

Seventh-day Adventists. Seventh-day Adventists celebrate the Lord's Supper in their churches about once a quarter. The consecrated bread and wine are regarded as symbols of Christ's body and blood and "show forth the Lord's death till He come."

Unitarians. Communion in Unitarian

churches is a symbolic rite of remembrance and fellowship. No supernatural power of "grace" resides in this sacrament, nor does its observance automatically convey any special spiritual gift.

THE TRINITY

Baptists. The doctrine of the Trinity is accepted by Baptists, who leave its sublime mystery to interpretation by theologians.

Catholics. Catholics believe in one God, in whom there are three Divine Persons co-equal in all things. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is a central mystery of the Catholic faith.

Christian Scientists. By the Trinity, Christian Scientists mean the unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but do not accept the Trinity as three persons in one. Life, Truth and Love are "the triune Principle called God."

Congregationalists. Congregationalists believe fully in the Holy Trinity.

Disciples of Christ. Disciples are not bothered by speculation about the Holy Trinity and the nature of a triune God. They baptize into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as Christ commanded. They believe that the Holy Spirit is the Comforter promised in the New Testament, but they do not worry over its constitution or the nature of its operations, accepting its guidance as constantly enlarging the horizons of Christian thought.

Episcopalians. In light of man's experience of God's working in the world, it is seen that God is as He reveals Himself. He is Creative Reality (God the Father); He is Expressive Act (God the Son); He is Responsive Power (God the Holy Spirit). He is

one God experienced in a "trinitarian" fashion.

Jehovah's Witnesses. Witnesses believe that Jehovah God and Christ Jesus are two distinct persons and are not combined with a so-called "Holy Ghost" in one godhead called a Trinity.

Jews. Jews do not accept the divinity of Christ and therefore cannot accept the concept of the Trinity. The Lord is One.

Lutherans. Lutherans believe in the Trinity as one God in three personalities.

Methodists. The meaning of the Trinity is not fully understood. The doctrine is the expression of the three aspects in our experience of God: the Creator, the Father; the historical personality of Christ, the Son; a pervading and continuing presence and power in our lives, the Holy Spirit. The Trinity is also the formula for understanding the personality of God. God is Love, Love must have an object. Before Creation God must have loved Christ. The divine activity linking the Father with the object of his love is the Holy Spirit.

"Mormons." The Latter-day Saint accepts the Godhead as three literal, distinct personalities: God the Father; His Son, Jesus the Christ (who is one with the Father in purpose and in thought, but separate from Him in physical fact); and the Holy Ghost, a Personage of Spirit. This interpretation is derived from literal scriptural language.

Presbyterians. Presbyterians think of God not as three individuals, but as three manifestations of One.

Quakers. There is wide freedom for personal opinion regarding the Trinity.

Friends tend to believe in the immanence of God rather than His transcendence.

Seventh-day Adventists. Seventh-day Adventists worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—"three Persons in one God."

Unitarians. Unitarians do not believe in the Trinity but in one God.

VIRGIN BIRTH

Baptists. A great majority undoubtedly accept the Virgin Birth. A substantial minority do not. Since Baptists have no authoritarian creed to control their faith and practice, each local parish has the right to decide whether or not to make acceptance of the doctrine of the Virgin Birth a condition of church membership.

Catholics. Catholics believe in the Virgin Birth and believe that Mary remained a virgin throughout her life.

Christian Scientists. Christian Scientists accept completely the Virgin Birth.

Congregationalists. Probably the majority do not accept the doctrine of the Virgin Birth; undoubtedly many do. The fact of Christ, and not the manner in which he was born, is held to be of dominant importance.

Disciples of Christ. It is probable that about ninety-nine per cent believe in the Virgin Birth; it is possible that others have doubts. There is no ecclesiastical or denominational authority that can declare one belief to be orthodox and reject the other as heretical.

Episcopalians. The creeds and the liturgy of the Episcopal Church assert the traditional belief that Jesus was born of Mary without human father. There is disagreement within the

Church, not on the *theological* meaning of the Virgin Birth, but on its biological detail. Most Episcopalians probably accept it as literally true; some regard it as symbolic in character.

Jehovah's Witnesses. Witnesses believe that Jesus was born miraculously, a virgin birth in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14.

Jews. Jews do not believe in the doctrine of the Virgin Birth.

Lutherans. Lutherans affirm the Apostles' Creed as a basic summary of belief, including "born of the Virgin Mary." However, Lutherans do not go on to the extra-Biblical doctrines regarding the perpetual virginity of Mary.

Methodists. The great majority accept the Virgin Birth literally. Some would distinguish the biological aspects from the theological implications. As long as a Methodist believes in the Deity of Christ, it is not necessary for him to believe that Christ was begotten without a human father.

"Mormons." The Latter-day Saint accepts the miraculous conception of Jesus the Christ.

Presbyterians. A majority of Presbyterians undoubtedly believe in the Virgin Birth. Some find a symbolic rather than a physical meaning in the accounts of the birth of Jesus.

Quakers. The question of the Virgin Birth does not seem as important a problem for Quakers as the meaning and teaching of Christ's life on earth and His continuing power to reveal Himself at all times and to all seekers.

Seventh-day Adventists. Seventh-day Adventists accept the Virgin Birth as

one of the vital truths of the Christian faith, foretold in the Old Testament and confirmed in the New.

Unitarians. Unitarians repudiate the dogma or doctrine of the Virgin Birth.

HEAVEN and HELL

Baptists. Most Baptists believe in some form of life beyond the grave. Ideas range from a nebulous, indefinable existence to a definite place, like a city of golden streets or a region of everlasting torment. Some Baptists find it difficult to reconcile the fact of an all-merciful God with endless punishment for sins committed within the short span of a lifetime on earth.

Catholics. Heaven is both a place and a state of being. The state consists essentially in seeing God "face to face." We have no knowledge of the place beyond the fact that it exists. Hell is both a place and a state of punishment. Purgatory exists to purge those souls who are not yet pure enough for heaven but have not died in a state of serious (mortal) sin.

Christian Scientists. Christian Scientists believe in heaven and hell but not in a geographical sense. In the words of Mrs. Eddy: "The sinner makes his own hell by doing evil, and the saint his own heaven by doing right."

Congregationalists. Heaven and hell are not viewed as places of bliss and torment. God's justice cannot be escaped; it will be heaven to be with God and hell to be without him.

Disciples of Christ. Practically all Disciples believe in the immortality of the soul and in a blissful reunion hereafter for all the faithful who have died in the Lord. Many doubtless believe in a literal paradise and hell. Many others are content to leave the details

of future rewards and punishments in the hands of Divine mercy. Disciple faith in general is a matter of deep personal conviction.

Episcopalians. Heaven is a state in which the vision of God is enjoyed in a "life of perfect service" of God; hell is alienation from God. Episcopalians do not believe in a physical heaven or hell; these are "states of being."

Jehovah's Witnesses. Hell is a place of rest, in hope of resurrection, not an inescapable place of torture. Heaven is the habitation of spirit creatures. The reward of spiritual life with Christ Jesus in heaven for men on earth is limited to exactly 144,000. The rest of mankind who gain life in God's new world will live forever in the paradise earth. The Devil and the willfully wicked will be permanently destroyed.

Jews. Jews believe in the immortality of the soul—an immortality whose nature is known only to God—but they no longer accept the literal idea of heaven and hell.

Lutherans. Those who live and die in faith in Christ will live with Him eternally, freed from the limitations of time and space. Predictions about this eternal life must necessarily be in picture language, for it is beyond the range of finite minds. Naïve descriptions of heaven and hell are inadequate, but victory over death is the certain destiny of God's people.

Methodists. Methodists believe in divine judgment after death. Goodness will be rewarded and evil punished. Concepts of heaven and hell vary from the concrete idea of golden streets and fiery furnaces to the more prevalent spiritual idea that heaven is the realm where the redeemed keep company with God and His Risen Son and hell

is the state where such fellowship is absent.

"Mormons." Heaven is looked to and lived for as a real place of eternal progress, with endless association with loved ones, with families and friends. For those wilfully indifferent to their opportunities on earth, the knowledge that they have fallen short of their highest possible happiness will be part of the punishment of the "hell" of hereafter.

Presbyterians. Heaven and hell are not only places; they are also states of mind and character. The Bible and human experience teach us that we are living in a moral universe; therefore, sin carries its own appropriate penalty, and righteousness is its own reward, including the vision of God.

Quakers. Friends consider heaven and hell as matters for individual interpretation. They do, nonetheless, believe in life after this life.

Seventh-day Adventists. The ancient supposition that people go to heaven or hell immediately upon death is held to be an infiltration of pagan mythology into Christian theology. The dead are merely asleep until the glorious return of Christ. Then and only then will final rewards and punishments be meted out.

Unitarians. The idea that a God of Love and Mercy would want to consign a human being to eternal damnation because of wrongdoing during a relatively brief spell of mortal existence, or that God will reward the mortal doers of good with everlasting happiness appears to most Unitarians as entirely inconsistent with any moral concept of our Deity. Unitarians repudiate literal interpretations of heaven and hell as places of eternal bliss or damnation.

SIN and SALVATION

Baptists. Every true believer in Christ as personal Savior is saved—without the intervention of preacher or church. The confession of sin is a personal matter between the individual and God. Each individual must give evidence of his personal redemption by faith, good works and the Christian way of life.

Catholics. Catholics believe in original sin and in the possibility of a man's damning himself for all eternity by deliberately and knowingly disobeying the law of God. Catholics believe that men are saved by faith and good works. Salvation comes through the Church but is not limited to visible members of the Church, in the case of those who are invincibly ignorant of the Church's divine authority.

Christian Scientists. Sin is the belief in the real existence of a mind or minds other than the Divine Mind, God. Christian Scientists hold that sin is unreal. If the sinner knew this, his capacity for sinning would be destroyed. Salvation consists of being saved from the illusions and delusions of mortal sense—the sense of being capable of becoming sick and dying.

Congregationalists. Sin is opposition or indifference to the will of God. God, however, is willing to forgive. When a person repents in faith, God accepts him—then he need have no fear of any future in this world or the next. He is "saved."

Disciples of Christ. Disciples, as a rule, reject the doctrine of original sin, but most believe we are all sinful creatures unless and until redeemed by the saving sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

Episcopalians. In man, sinner because he is ridiculously proud and self-centered, there is no real "health"; by

fellowship with God in Christ, he is brought into the sphere of healthy and whole life. Salvation, therefore, means that one is given the wholeness which is God's will for man, and is delivered from arrogance and selfishness. Salvation has to do not only with the "here-after" but also with man's present earthly existence.

Jehovah's Witness. Sin is lawlessness. The human race was born in sin because Adam and Eve rebelled against God and His law. Salvation is only possible through the ransom sacrifice of Christ Jesus. It will come to those who conform to the conditions upon which it is offered. All must accept Christ Jesus and obey. Those who believe will be saved but the wicked will be destroyed.

Jews. Judaism does not accept the doctrine of original sin. Nor can Judaism accept the principle of vicarious atonement—the idea of salvation through Christ. Every man is responsible for his own salvation. Jews approach God—each man after his own fashion—without a mediator.

Lutherans. Sin is the word describing the situation of all people as disobedient to God. Sin is not specific wrongdoing (this is the result of sin), but the basic condition of our personality. Salvation is a gift from God; even the desire for salvation comes from God, and only God can save human beings.

Methodists. When men truly and earnestly repent of their sins, God forgives them. Man's salvation comes by faith and through the grace of God. Salvation means not only security in heaven after death but a present experience of God's grace and power.

"Mormons." "Salvation," according to Latter-day Saints, is universal. How-

ever, "exaltation" (with the highest eternal opportunities) must be earned by obedience to laws, ordinances, and commandments of the Kingdom.

Presbyterians. God pardons our sins and accepts us, not for any merit of our own, but because of our faith in the perfect obedience of Christ and His sacrificial death. Forgiveness, grace, and salvation are obtained through a direct personal relationship to God. Salvation is not earned by good works but is the gift of God. Good works are the *fruits* of salvation, evidence that we are growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ.

Quakers. Friends point to the inherent goodness in men and women, instead of emphasizing the inheritance of sin. The term "original sin" overemphasizes the power of evil. Even when he is fallen, man still belongs to God, who continues to appeal to the goodness within him.

Seventh-day Adventists. Salvation is by grace alone. Keeping the commandments is the result, the evidence of salvation.

Unitarians. Unitarians recognize the evil in our world and man's responsibility for much of it. They do not believe in original sin. Man has native capacities for both good and evil. His natural tendency for good can grow through proper environment, effective education, and honest effort. Unitarians believe in "salvation by character." If a man is to be "saved," the image of God within man will save him—here as well as hereafter.

DIVORCE

Baptists. Baptists do not approve of divorce except on grounds of adultery. But there is no regulation among Baptist churches regarding divorce. Each

clergyman depends on his conscience in deciding whether or not to officiate at the marriage of divorced persons.

Catholics. The Church does not recognize any absolute divorce between a couple who are validly married, where one or the other would be free to marry again. Separation from bed and board may be approved.

Christian Scientists. The Church of Christ, Scientist, takes no doctrinaire position on such social questions as divorce, but leaves its members free to work out their salvation on the basis of their highest understanding of moral and spiritual law.

Congregationalists. Though the churches have never made a joint official pronouncement on divorce, they frown upon current divorce habits of Americans. They do not oppose legal divorce after a couple has been "spiritually" divorced.

Disciples of Christ. There is no central church authority on this subject. Some ministers and congregations oppose any remarriage of divorced persons. Others will remarry the innocent party to a divorce obtained on the ground of adultery. Others, perhaps a majority, believe that divorce has become a legal function of the State and will remarry anyone to whom the civil government accords the right of remarriage.

Episcopalians. In America, the "canons" (church law) do not recognize divorce but do provide a number of grounds for annulment. A bishop may permit a divorced person to remarry if certain conditions are met.

Jehovah's Witnesses. Divorce may be obtained only on the ground of marital unfaithfulness.

Jews. Divorce is permitted when love and harmony have ceased to exist between a man and a woman, and their marriage has become empty and meaningless.

Lutherans. Following the New Testament, Lutherans agree that adultery and desertion may be grounds for divorce. They feel that Christians should not legislate general principles to apply to all cases; every case must be considered individually.

Methodists. No Methodist minister should remarry a divorced person whose mate is living and unmarried, unless the person is the innocent party to a divorce on the grounds of adultery or other vicious conditions invalidating the marriage vow.

"Mormons." Divorce is deplored and discouraged. "Temple divorces" (as distinguished from civil divorces) may be granted only by the president of the Church, for serious cause, including infidelity.

Presbyterians. Divorce is permitted to the innocent party on scriptural grounds (adultery), and that party may remarry. Divorce is also permitted in cases of willful desertion. In cases of doubt, the minister can consult his Presbytery's Committee on Divorce. However, no minister may remarry persons who have been divorced less than twelve months.

Quakers. Divorce is contrary to the "Discipline of Friends." Friends' Meetings are urged not to permit weddings of divorced persons as long as one of the divorced couple is still alive.

Seventh-day Adventists. Seventh-day Adventists follow the Biblical position that adultery is the only possible ground for divorce.

Unitarians. Unitarianism recognizes no specifically theological doctrines as regards divorce. It is referred to the individual's conscience, intelligence, and common sense. The church is always ready to offer counsel and advice in keeping with its ethical and spiritual ideals.

BIRTH CONTROL

Baptists. No parish Baptist Church and no ecclesiastical convention of Baptists has ever by resolution expressed approval or disapproval of birth control. Most Baptists would resent and repudiate such a resolution as an unwarranted intrusion into the private life of husband and wife.

Catholics. The Church is opposed to birth control in the belief that artificial contraception is against the law of God and that because it is immoral, it cannot be employed as a means, even to a good end. Birth prevention is regarded as an evil in itself—circumstances cannot change it into something morally good or indifferent. "Natural" birth control—the so-called rhythm theory—is permitted (as the Pope recently stated) in cases where undue medical or economic hardship makes family limitation imperative.

Christian Scientists. Married couples are free to follow their own judgment as to having children and as to the number they will have.

Congregationalists. There is no official statement on birth control from the churches. In general, Congregationalists believe that the use by man of the brains which God has given him to invent means of preventing conception is not contrary to God's will.

Disciples of Christ. A majority of Disciple ministers believe that birth

control is justifiable under certain circumstances. In general, Disciples are content to leave such matters to the individual consciences of husband and wife.

Episcopalians. When birth control is practiced without selfish motives, it is permissible.

Jehovah's Witnesses. Birth control is regarded as an entirely personal matter.

Jews. The Jewish religion has traditionally been opposed to birth control when practiced for purely selfish reasons. It sanctions birth control if pregnancy represents a health hazard or if previous children have been born defective; modern Judaism extends this to cases of extreme poverty, inadequate living conditions.

Lutherans. There is no general objection to birth control. It can be sinful and selfish either to have an overabundance of children without considering the responsibilities involved or to avoid parenthood completely.

Methodists. The General Conference of the Methodist Church has never made an official pronouncement on birth control. Statements by individual leaders suggest that prevailing opinion approves the use of contraceptives by lawfully married couples when in the interest of the mothers' health and the children's welfare. The ultimate reason must be unselfish.

"Mormons." The Church advocates rearing large families; birth control, as commonly understood, is contrary to its teachings.

Presbyterians. The Presbyterian Church does not legislate for its people on personal issues. Nothing in the Church's teaching can be construed as forbid-

ding an intelligent, conservative, and unselfish employment of birth control.

Quakers. Birth control is a matter for the individual conscience. Education for marriage and parenthood has long been a concern of Quakers.

Seventh-day Adventists. Seventh-day Adventists, as a denomination, have never taken an official position on the matter of birth control.

Unitarians. Unitarianism recognizes no specifically theological doctrines regarding birth control. This question is referred to the individual's conscience, intelligence, and common sense.

PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH

Baptists. The historic Baptist view holds that every church member and every professing Christian is an evangelist. Throughout their history, Baptists have engaged in very active missionary effort at home and abroad.

Catholics. The Catholic Church from its very beginning has sent out missionaries to all nations to make known to all men the Gospel of Christ and incorporate them into His Church. Catholicism is a world-wide religion meant for all men of all races at all times.

Christian Scientists. The Church of Christ, Scientist, engages in no formal missionary activities. However, its Board of Lectureship, its periodicals, and its radio programs are important elements in its preaching of the gospel to all men.

Congregationalists. Missionary work is carried on in the name of Christianity through preaching of the Gospel. It is not carried on to propagate Congregationalism *per se*.

Disciples of Christ. Disciples of Christ

invite but do not proselytize. An offer of fellowship to any adult who wishes to take his stand by the Cross of the Risen Lord is given at the close of Sunday morning service.

Episcopalians. The Church has been active in propagation of the faith, carrying missionary work throughout the world.

Jehovah's Witnesses. Witnesses believe they have the most urgent message of all time and believe they must preach to people around the world before this generation passes away. Witnesses enter people's homes to try to convert them and they distribute literature on street corners.

Jews. Modern Judaism is not a proselytizing creed.

Lutherans. Lutherans believe that Christians are under compulsion to seek to convert all people to the Christian faith. This is a matter of doctrinal conviction.

Methodists. Methodists put much emphasis on missionary expansion and evangelistic sharing of the Gospel.

"Mormons." Missionaries have been active since the 1830's in proselytizing.

Presbyterians. Presbyterianism is a decidedly missionary faith. The central core of the missionary effort is evangelistic.

Quakers. Friends do not try to make converts; they discover those who are in unity with them and nurture them until they are accorded full membership following a written request of the applicant to become a member.

Seventh-day Adventists. Seventh-day Adventists have missionaries all over the world and publications are issued in 198 languages. Seventh-day Adven-

tists carry on a large health and medical work alongside their evangelistic activities.

Unitarians. Unitarians do not proselytize and do not send out missionaries.

CHURCH ORGANIZATION

Baptists. Baptists have no hierarchy, no centralized control of religious activity, no headquarters' "oversight" of churches or liturgies, practices or regulations. The local parish church is a law unto itself.

Catholics. The Catholic Church describes itself as "the visible society founded by Jesus Christ and consisting of members throughout the world who are united by the same Faith, particularly the same Sacraments, and in spiritual matters accept the supreme authority of the Bishop of Rome (the Pope), the successor of Saint Peter." The Pope is assisted by the College of Cardinals. The Church is divided into bishoprics. Each Catholic lives under the jurisdiction of a bishop or archbishop, appointed by the Pope. Each bishopric is divided into parishes and each parish is directed by a pastor appointed by the bishop. Side by side with the parochial clergy are members of the religious orders (who may be priests, simple monks, or nuns) who engage in a variety of activities under the ultimate direction of the hierarchy.

Christian Scientists. Christian Science has no ordained clergy or personal pastors. There is no personal preacher in a Christian Science service; texts are read aloud by a first and second reader. A Christian Science practitioner is one who prays for those who ask his prayers in their behalf. To be registered as a public practitioner, one must be approved by the Mother Church, the First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, Massachusetts.

192 Facts and Figures on Religion

Congregationalists. Congregationalists have county and state associations of churches and a national association—the General Council; but these have no power over the internal life of any of the congregations. The freedom of the congregation is inviolable. No minister beloved by his people can be removed by external pressure. No church can be disbanded except by the wish of its people.

Disciples of Christ. The average Disciple church is administered by a pastor, an Official Board of Elders and Deacons, and perhaps representatives of the Christian Women's Fellowship. Elders look after the spiritual welfare of members; deacons manage incidental business. All matters of fundamental importance must ultimately be decided by the congregation as a whole.

Episcopalians. There are three orders of ministry: bishops, priests, and deacons. There are also many orders of monks and nuns. In the United States there are parishes with elected laymen to represent the congregation; dioceses with the "convention" under which the bishop and his clergy carry on the Church's work; a general convention which meets every three years and represents the entire American Church. Neither bishops nor parish clergy have any autocratic rights; all must cooperate with the laity.

Jehovah's Witnesses. Jehovah's Witnesses are a society or body of ministers, for the public ceremony of water immersion identifies one as a minister of God. Boys and girls are invited to preach. Ministers at national headquarters and in the field are voluntary workers. The world-wide members of the Society elect seven ministers as a board of directors; the board chooses

one director as president. Clerical garb is never used.

Jews. There is no religious hierarchy in Judaism. The authority of the rabbi is based not on his position but upon his learning. In Orthodox practice, the rabbi rarely leads in services; the cantor conducts worship. Any well-informed layman may rise to the pulpit to lead the congregation in prayer. The modern rabbi is responsible for religious education, for worship in the synagogue, for ceremonials surrounding birth, confirmation, marriage, and death, and for pastoral guidance. Judaism is essentially a family religion; the home is often regarded as a fitting place of worship.

Lutherans. Church conventions, which elect presidents and other officials, are the main instruments of authority in the American churches. The foundation of this authority is in the congregations themselves. Each congregation owns its own church building or other property and is self-governing in all of its local affairs. Men are called to the office of the ministry by God through the congregations, and if they cease to perform the functions of their office they cease to be ministers.

Methodists. The Methodist Church in America parallels rather uniquely the pattern of American government. The executive branch consists of a Council of Bishops elected by jurisdictional conferences composed of ministers and laymen. Each bishop presides over an area. The bishops appoint the ministers of individual parishes. The legislative power is vested in a General Conference which meets every four years and is composed of both clergy and laymen in equal numbers. Delegates are democratically elected by an annual conference and on a proportional basis. The

supreme judicial power rests in a Judicial Council whose members and qualifications are determined by the General Conference of the church.

"Mormons." The Church has a strong central organization with a First Presidency of three presiding high priests followed in order by the Council of the Twelve Apostles (with assistants); a patriarch, the First Council of the Seventy; also a Presiding Bishopric who preside over the Aaronic Priesthood. Geographically, the Church is divided into "stakes" and "wards" (somewhat resembling the diocese and parishes), and "missions."

Presbyterians. The people govern the Church through elected representatives. The layman has a prominent role in the Presbyterian Church. All property is vested in laymen—not in ministers or bishops. Laymen are eligible for the highest office (moderator) in each court. The courts are the Session, made up of the elders and ministers who have supreme authority in the spiritual matters of the local church; the Presbytery, which has oversight of all congregations within its prescribed area; the Synod, composed of ministers and representative elders from congregations within a specified number of Presbyteries; and the General Assembly, which is the court of final appeal and representative of the whole church.

Quakers. Friends do not have an ordained clergy. They believe that everyone has the potentiality to become a minister. There is no division between clergy and laity because both ideas are eliminated. Elders and overseers are appointed to serve each meeting. Elders are given the "oversight" of the religious meetings for worship, for marriage, and for memorial services

Doctrines and Beliefs 193

at time of death. Overseers look after the pastoral care of the membership. All meetings have a recorder who is responsible for the careful keeping of all vital statistics.

Seventh-day Adventists. Seventh-day Adventists have developed a global organization, comprising twelve divisions, directed by the General Conference. Each of these twelve divisions is made up of several union conferences, which in turn are made up of local conferences, each consisting of a group of churches. Lay members elect officers of their local churches and appoint delegates to local conferences for the election of their officers.

Unitarians. Unitarians practice a congregational form of government. There is no authority above the congregation itself. It sets aside a man to be the minister; the act of setting aside is regarded as ordination. Once ordained in this manner, the minister remains ordained throughout his life and can move from one congregation to another.

POSITION REGARDING OTHER RELIGIONS

Baptists. Baptists are staunch believers in the historic Baptist principle of full, complete, unrestricted religious freedom and demand it for other religions just as zealously as for themselves.

Catholics. American Catholics believe in and practice religious tolerance. However, Catholics believe that theirs is the only true religion.

Christian Scientists. The Christian Scientist does not feel superior to the adherents of any denomination. Every man is free to demonstrate the efficacy of his own faith; each is entitled to encouragement in his pursuit of spiritual objectives.

Congregationalists. Congregationalists believe in cooperation among the Christian denominations and encourage exchanges of ideas with Jewish groups. In any community they oppose religious isolationism and denominational exclusiveness.

Disciples of Christ. Disciples do not believe theirs is the only true religion; they do believe it is most nearly in accord with the practices of the early Christian churches. They never doubt the right of any man to go directly to God, by prayer, for guidance in all problems of conscience. They have no sense of rivalry among the denominations.

Episcopallians. The Church is Christ's instrument for fulfilling His purpose in the world and the means by which His continuing presence is made available. Of that one Church, Episcopallians believe they are a part; they have never claimed they are the *only* part.

Jehovah's Witnesses. Witnesses believe that theirs is the only true faith and that there is only one way to gain salvation. They do not believe that the majority of people will meet the strict requirements of true faith.

Jews. Jews do not presume to judge the honest worshiper of any faith. "The righteous of *all* nations are worthy of immortality."

Lutherans. Lutherans believe there is only one church, but it is not any visible institution. It consists of all the congregations of believers which rightly teach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments. Lutherans are eager for

better understanding and cooperation among Christians everywhere.

Methodists. Methodist leaders encourage tolerance and understanding toward all other religious bodies.

"Mormons." The "Mormon" believes his is the "right way." The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints affirms it is the "restored" Church of Jesus Christ, with the same authority, organization, and ordinances that Jesus established on earth but which were lost by centuries of change and apostasy.

Presbyterians. Presbyterians believe that every man has the right to choose and practice the faith that he personally accepts.

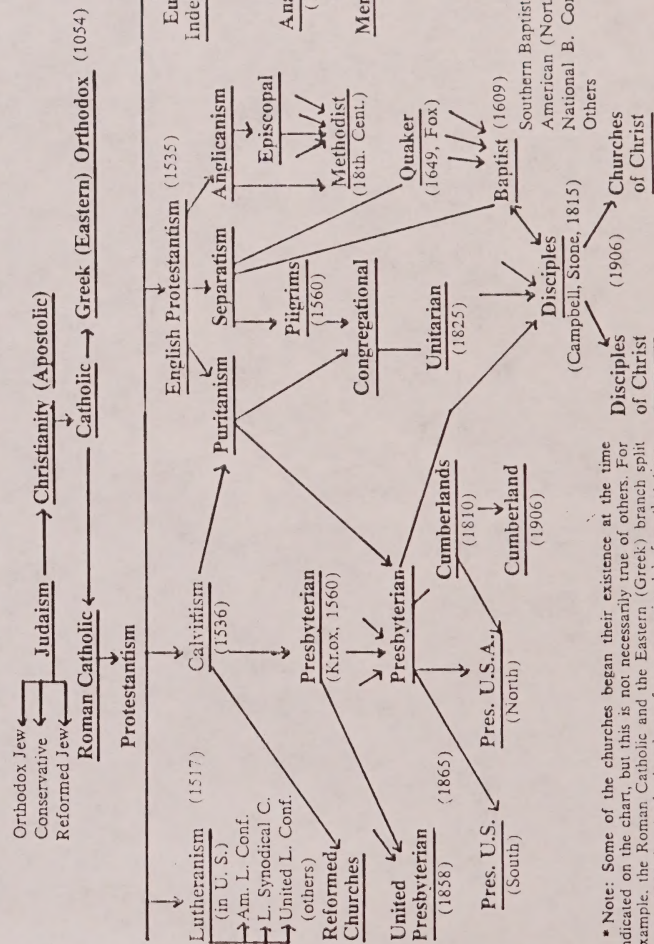
Quakers. To Friends, all those who do the will of the Father are brethren of Jesus in the Spirit. In their attitude toward other religions, Friends have considered that they are members of one household in the family of God.

Seventh-day Adventists. Seventh-day Adventists are ardent champions of religious liberty. They are opposed to all religious legislation such as "blue" laws and support the principle of separation of church and state.

Unitarians. Unitarians are firm believers in the "Church Universal," which includes all men and women of every race, color, and creed who seek God and worship Him through service to their fellow man. Every individual has the right to approach God in his own way; every religious community has the duty of creating such patterns of worship as best serve the needs of those who worship.

3. Chart: Genealogy of Major Judaeo-Christian Bodies in the United States *

By ROBERT WINSTON GARDEN, Professor, Schreiner Institute, Kerrville, Texas



* Note: Some of the churches began their existence at the time indicated on the chart, but this is not necessarily true of others. For example, the Roman Catholic and the Eastern (Greek) branch split in A.D. 1054, but both churches, of course, existed before that time. Likewise the Anglican Church (Church of England) did not originate in A.D. 1535, but it was in that year that it pulled out from the authority of Rome.

**"TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE
DIACONATE IN THE
UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES"**

Reverend Nancy L. Wilson

Los Angeles, California

August 1, 1980

INTRODUCTION OF THESIS

The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (U.F.M.C.C.) was founded in 1968, as a Christian Church for all people with a special ministry to the gay community. In our Fellowship By-Laws, (Attachment No. 1) we state that we recognize an order of lay ministry, the diaconate. The description and the reality of that office reflects the eclectic ecclesiology of the U.F.M.C.C. The role of the Deacon in M.C.C. has never been thoroughly examined or explored; it has merely been assumed. Behind this problem lies the fact that our Church has not systematically examined either its ecclesiology or its theology of ministry in depth; rather, we have attempted to live out our individual perceptions of what M.C.C. is. We now have two commissions (Government, Structures and Systems; and Faith, Fellowship and Order) which are trying to get M.C.C. people to discuss and come to some consensus about important theological/practical issues. Part of the reason for our previous neglect of these tasks is the fact that we are so new, and the urgency of the work we are doing, locally and Fellowship-wide, seems to leave no time for the "luxury" of a thorough thinking-through of such matters. Also, I suspect that some of us are afraid we'll really find out what others of us really think!!!

Churches complain of not knowing how to train deacons, mostly, I suspect, because no one is quite sure what they are. The purpose of my project has been to come up with a tentative, working definition of the diaconate in M.C.C. My method consisted of: 1) research on the history of the diaconate in the Christian Church; 2) research on contemporary ecclesiology and theologies of ministry (particularly from the viewpoint of Liberation Theology) as they impinge on the diaconate; 3) reporting the results of a survey I designed and compiled for those in M.C.C. involved with the diaconate; 4) finding within M.C.C. documents the basis for a theology of ministry and ecclesiology that could help define the diaconate for M.C.C.; 5) the implementation of a training program for deacons in a local M.C.C. church which involved the trainees in developing an authentic definition of the diaconate for themselves and 6) the evaluation of that program and final conclusions and recommendations to the U.F.M.C.C. concerning the future of the diaconate.

CHAPTER 1

A Brief Overview of the Diaconate in Christian History

The word "deacon" is derived from the Greek word "diakonos." That word, in its first century usage meant "one who waits on tables;" "servant;" or "lackey."¹ In the New Testament, it is used in the Gospels in that sense, and by Jesus as a metaphor for ministry (Luke 22:27; Matthew 20:26-28). The New Testament writers use the term to describe Jesus' model of ministry (Philippians 2:7; Acts 3:13; 26; 4:27, 30; Romans 15:8). Also, "diakonos" becomes, in the New Testament, a general term for service or ministry.² This New Testament understanding pre-dates the development of a monarchical episcopate in the Church in which the diaconate became a stepping stone to priesthood.

Edward Echlin, in his book, *The Deacon in the Church*, also claims a strong connection between the Greek word "leiturgia" (translated "the work of the people," from which we derive our word "liturgy") and "diakonia."³ This connection originates in the Levite tradition of the post exilic Jews. Echlin claims that there is a connection between the "leiturgia" of the levitical assistants to priests in the temple (as doorkeepers, custodians of the sacred vessels, Deut. 14:26-29; 2 Samuel 6:9) and the "diakonia" of waiting on tables (1 Cor. 11; James 1:27).⁴ There seems to be a consistent tension between the cultic and service connotations of the word "diakonos," and consequently the term deacon.

The actual history of the office of deacon in the Church is more complicated. Harry Boer, in *A Short History of the Early Church*, says, quite bluntly, "When and how the office of deacon originated is not known."⁵ On the face of it, that isn't very encouraging. The fact is that the New Testament does not speak of a uniform ecclesiology of theology of ministry (they had the same problem that M.C.C. now faces!!). There are models and metaphors and references to charisms, gifts, offices, titles and disagreements about them, but no clearly revealed or "ordained" structure. Edward Schweizer speaks of this in his book, *Church Order in the New Testament*, in relationship to the ecclesiology of Luke-Acts:

"This almost casual mention of special office bearers in the Church, and the absence of definite titles, show that the order of these forms is not fundamental to the Lucan Church . . . very diverse forms, monarchical, oligarchical and democratic elements standing side by side." (p. 90)

Even Paul, Schewizer says, referring to the Church as the Body of Christ, speaks of many gifts and tasks, but no one order or system.⁶

There are only two New Testament passages which have been traditionally understood to speak of the origin or purpose of the diaconate: Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. There are problems with both these texts.

First of all, Acts 6:1-6 does not claim to tell the story of the origin of the diaconate, although it has been interpreted that way since Irenaeus made the connection.⁷ Scholars have debated the precise meaning of Acts 6:1-6. The story does not use the noun for deacon and it seems to "represent the rise of a Hellenistic office to counter Jewish control of the Church - a Hellenistic Seven to parallel the Jewish Twelve."⁸ Other scholars believe that the conflict was between Hellenistic Jews and Palestinian Jews (both Christians).⁹ Harry Boer sees this as the origin of elders (p. 23). The Acts passage is interesting in that the seven are elected, and there seems to be an acknowledgment of a need for persons to be set aside for the caring for human needs (feeding the poor). Certainly the event in Acts 6 is a precursor to the development of a Church office. However, at this stage, it seems to be a local matter, for local needs, not Church-wide. It is indigenous and spontaneous, not yet institutionalized. One must also remember that the Book of Acts is an idealized (and in this section, second-hand) account of Church origins. It is not at all clear that Luke intends for us to read this story as the story of the "first deacons."

1 Timothy is one of the pastoral epistles, whose authorship is questioned. The problem with 1 Timothy is its date. By the time 1 Timothy 3:8-13 was written, the office of deacon as a Church-wide office is assumed. By the time of the writing of the pastoral epistles, there has clearly been a major shift towards a hierarchical ecclesiology in a post-apostolic age. The Church apparently began with a fluid sense of Church order -- with apostles, teachers, elders, prophets, etc. Gradually, however, the Church moved from this charismatic/servanthood style (not consistently ordered) to a monarchical episcopate.¹⁰ The reasons are probably many: the perceived need for "tightening control" in the face of persecution and "heresy;" the delay of the parousia, and the corresponding need for continuity in being faithful to the apostolic witness; and possibly the development of sacramentalism in which "great concern is focused on appointing guardians of the sacrament."¹¹ 1 Timothy is a product of this shift, and gives us no clues about the *origins* of the diaconate per se.

What do we know about this office of deacon which apparently emerges late in the first century?

From the writings of Bishop Ignatius of Antioch (our first clear picture of a monarchical bishop)¹² we are told that the deacon is a "special friend" to the Bishop.¹³ The deacon often functioned as the bishop's assistant, counselor, administrative aide and cultic servant, paralleling the temple tradition.¹⁴ During this period (the early second century) the Bishop was still the head of a local Church, not a large diocese. So, in a sense, the deacon was a "pastoral assistant." According to the *Didache* (the first known church manual/sacramentary, from the early second century) deacons were 1) not to be greedy, 2) to be appointed/ordained according to the needs and size of a congregation and 3) to be special ministers of the Eucharist.¹⁵ Further:

"... the deacon must be ready for whatever the Bishop directs. He may receive the contributions of the faithful, though passing them on at once to the bishop, and should minister devotedly to the sick and infirm, if necessary laying down his life for the brethren (sic)."¹⁶

Deacons are reported to have been active, in the early Church, in the ministries of the sacraments, word and charity.¹⁷ Sometimes they served as mediators of disputes, in listening to people's needs and complaints (the "eyes and ears of the bishop.")¹⁸ Deacons preached, taught and consoled. They were the doorkeepers at the liturgy (watching for persecutors, escorting the catechumens out of the sanctuary before Holy Communion).¹⁹

In the East, deacons were the "heralds" of the church in worship (possibly akin to being a "master of ceremonies," or the "liturgist" as we often say). The deacon in the East was responsible to lead the "bidding" prayers (community prayers) during worship.²⁰

The "Golden Age" of the diaconate really occurred during the latter days of persecution and the post-Nicene missionary age of the early church.²¹ During that time, bishops were frequently traveling, in prison, or hiding out. There were not enough bishops or priests to meet the pastoral and missionary needs of the early church. Deacons were needed to fill in, to function as pastors and missionaries.²² Deacons preached until the late 5th century²³ and were oftentimes functioning as the "managers of the community,"²⁴ possibly comparable to the "parish administrator" of contemporary American Catholic Churches. They developed comprehensive (for those times) social services in Rome²⁵ and an archdeacon (assistant to the Pope) actually became Pope without first being made a priest.²⁶

What happened to change the role of the deacon? Apparently, as the needs of the church began to change in the post-apostolic age, and with the rise of "sacerdotalism" the role of the deacon came into question. The Bishop/deacon relationship was essentially Hellenistic in origin, while the office of presbyter (elder or "priest") was of Jewish origin. Bishops were elders also²⁷, and these offices began co-existing. It becomes clear that priests who were not Bishops resented the "special friend" and seemingly privileged role of the deacon, believing that this should be reserved for the priest. There was resistance to the idea of a deacon being able to "fill in" for the Bishop or a priest. It was the viewpoint of the priests that there should be a strict ascending hierarchy of deacon-presbyter-bishop, and no permanent diaconate. Their viewpoint eventually won out, especially as the need for deacons to "fill in" declined.²⁸

One of the reasons for the decline in that need was the rise of monasticism, which captured the imagination of those attracted to the servanthood style of ministry. In many ways, one might say that the monastic movement took the place of the diaconate in acts of service, teaching and charity.²⁹ The end result was that the diaconate suffered as the institutionalization of the Church solidified, and it was trivialized into becoming only a ceremonial cultic role (assisting with the Eucharist), a temporary stepping stone to the priesthood. The permanent diaconate simply withered until: "On the eve of the Reformation ... his (the deacon's) was a preliminary albeit ascending grade in a pseudo-Dionysian hierarchy."³⁰ The Church had largely adopted the hierarchal model of the Roman Empire for Church government.

One of the cornerstones of the Reformation was the recognition of the incompatibility of this model with the New Testament and for the needs of the people. Calvin, in particular, sought to re-organize the Church in order (in his opinion) to bring it into conformity with what he perceived as a "pre-Dionysian" and "pre-hierarchal" New Testament order. The problem is, of course, that Calvin inferred a church order, or read it into the New Testament. In any case, Calvin attempted to restore the diaconate, not so much to have it as part of the clerical hierarchy, but as a lay office, as managers of the temporal affairs of the church.³¹ In addition, "Calvin attempted to restore the office of deacon to its original function (relief of human need). In Geneva, they took over the care of the poor, the needy and distressed, including the sick (hospitals)."³² By "original function" Thompson is referring to Acts 6, and the assumption that that passage is the basis of the diaconate, an assumption I have questioned.

In any case, the Reformation brought with it a revival of the diaconate, taking many forms. Below is a brief list of the current practices in several mainline denominations:

Baptist: Deacons are elected by the congregation, not ordained, care for the spiritual life of the congregation, help the needy, assist in administration of baptism and Lord's Supper, discipline of careless Church members. Trustees handle finances.

Episcopal: The Bishop ordains men and women to the office of deacon, a step to the priesthood, help the priest with worship, especially Holy Communion; also seek out and serve the poor. *Perpetual Deacons:* ordained, assist at communion, teaching and caring for the sick and needy and indigent. Deacons are subject to the Bishop and must pass an examination on a course of study. There have been deaconesses, but these were religious orders, fading away with the advent of women's ordination.

Methodist: The office of deacon is the first stage on the way to ordination as an elder, usually occurs at the end of the first year of seminary, it is itself an ordained office, open to women and men. Works of charity are carried out by the Women's Society of Christian Service.

Presbyterian: Deacons are responsible to the Session yet called forth by the congregation, not seminary trained, yet ordained to this special task, flexible but concerned with broad spectrum of human needs, ie., social justice matters, ministry to special groups within a community. They may or may not assist in the serving of communion. Includes women.

Roman Catholic: One of three minor orders, ordained, in the course of preparation for the priesthood. They are celibate in the Roman Rite. However, one of the most interesting developments has been the revival of the permanent diaconate in the post-Vatican II Church, in response to local needs for pastoral ministry. There has been discussion of and now use of married deacons (males), after a course of study and preparation they are ordained; to function permanently to preach, baptize, marry, but not say mass.

United Church of Christ: Differing definitions in different conferences; open to women and men; called by local congregation. Help pastor prepare people for baptism, confirmation, church membership, death and burial; prepare and distribute Holy Communion; being sensitive and responsive to local church needs.³³

In the next chapter, I will examine some questions arising from this overview.

CHAPTER 2

Contemporary Issues in Theology and Ministry Which Impinge on the Diaconate

Not only is it important to historically contextualize the diaconate problem in the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches; but we must understand that the U.F.M.C.C. itself is a product of and participant in a very contemporary matrix of theological/ecclesiological, social issues and movements. In order to really discover the diaconate in M.C.C., we must understand M.C.C.'s unique context.

M.C.C. began as a church movement in response to the desperate spiritual, social and political needs of gay men and lesbians in a homophobic society. The internalization of oppression had for centuries destroyed gay people. Only in the last few years has there been any real documentation on the cost of oppression in the lives of lesbians and gay men: the rejection, the feelings of self-hatred, the isolation, despair, the physical and emotional abuse, accompanying drug and alcohol addiction, suicide, or resignation to lives of "quiet desperation." That does not include the systematic genocide of gays which has occurred in many cultures even in this century. M.C.C. was founded in the service of liberation from these ills, in the service of bringing God's love home to those who believed they were outside the gates forever. Soon after M.C.C. was founded, the contemporary gay rights movement really began to take hold. But why a Church? Reverend Troy Perry, M.C.C.'s founder, had always been conscious of the importance of the black churches in the civil rights struggles of the 1960's, and U.F.M.C.C. took some cues from that struggle. From the beginning, M.C.C. was a church founded in the service of liberation.¹

Secondly, as the church grew, it encountered other movements that paralleled and challenged it. The contemporary feminist critique of culture and domination radically affected the Fellowship. As lesbian feminists, and gay men who identified with feminism began a dialogue within the Fellowship, U.F.M.C.C. began to wake up to women's needs, to the need to critique patriarchal values, structure and language. That challenge has been consistently painful, but consistently in the forefront of the Fellowship's identity-formation process as a church in the service of liberation.²

Obviously, the history of the diaconate within the Christian Church largely excluded women. There has been much debate over the meaning of the word in 1 Timothy 3:11 that refers to women. Does it mean "wives" or "female deacons" (deaconesses)? Most contemporary scholars now believe it means female deacons.³ Apparently there were female deacons and female church leaders in the early church, particularly in Asia Minor.⁴ But, again, as the monarchical episcopate became the dominant ecclesiology of the Church, the role of women diminished. The charismatic, fluid style of the earliest Church had broken through some of the barriers of sexism, which barriers were quickly re-erected in the ensuing centuries. Once the diaconate was no longer permanent, but a stepping stone to the priesthood, of course (!) women could no longer become deacons. Some churches, such as the Episcopal Church, compromised by having a permanent order of deaconesses who were not deacons in the male Episcopal sense, and who could not, therefore, become priests. This has all now changed in the Episcopal Church in the U.S. with the ordination of women as deacons and then priests.

As a Church founded for gay men and lesbians; and, as a Church being confronted with the feminist critique, one would assume there could never be any question about women in ministry in the U.F.M.C.C. But quite honestly, there was some question in the beginning. But that quickly changed, and the assumption that women would be electable and ordainable to any office within the U.F.M.C.C. was accomplished. Presently, one third of our professional ministers are women, and four sevenths of our highest administrative body, the Board of Elders, are women. In most local churches in the U.F.M.C.C. women are on the board, are exhorters and deacons. And, in those Churches where that is not true, it is at least theoretically true that a woman may not be prohibited from holding any office. There has been a continuous critique of the traditional church structure, and style insofar as it in any way reflects the "Dionysian" model or is based on patriarchal domination, repression and control. Which model of the Church, we are asking, is consistent with the feminist critique of culture? Can we respond in our structures and order of ministry to contemporary prophetic voices, voices which echo the prophets of Israel and the servanthood ministry of Jesus the Christ?⁵

More recently, the U.F.M.C.C. has had to begin to face contemporary social and theological questions regarding race and class.⁶ We have been an American-based Church that has tried to image itself as international. Only in the last few years have we begun at all to reach out to non-white or non-western peoples. As we do that, we discover our own racism, classism and American bias. That, too, has been and is becoming, a painful experience. A church in the service of liberation that is racist and classist cannot authentically preach or live out its calling from God-in-Christ. So, as we tentatively venture into South America, as we attempt to help re-settle gay Cuban refugees, as we join with a Maoris church from New Zealand, we allow the cries and needs and vision of the Third World to impinge on

us. How can a church in the service of liberation free itself from the strangling bonds of privilege? Can the U.F.M.C.C. really open itself up to the theology of relinquishment? ⁷

Another issue that is connected to these, and a part of the matrix is the clergy/laity question. The more we learn of the origins of ecclesiastical offices and orders, the more we understand them to be rooted in a misogynist, classist, self-serving history. ⁸ What is the relationship of ecclesiastical office to ministry? Does the clergy/laity split always end up with the clergy as the do-it-all ministers, and laity as the passive observers? Does it always end up repressing the true gifts of all the people? How do we most effectively minister in the world? Do we need professional ministers? For what purpose? Where does the diaconate fit into our understanding of the ministry? Are deacons merely "amateur clergy?" Are they "clericized laypeople?" Neither and both? Should they be ordained? Elected? Appointed? To whom are they accountable? What is their role?

Finally, what model of the church is most appropriate for the U.F.M.C.C.? Which model will allow this church in the service of liberation to respond to its calling? Which model will adequately provide the basis for an authentic diaconate in the U.F.M.C.C.?

These are the questions which formed the basis for both the survey and the training program which follow.

CHAPTER 3

U.F.M.C.C. Documents, the Survey and the Diaconate

Before getting into the survey itself, I would like to take a look at specific U.F.M.C.C. documents and what clues they can give us about a theology of ministry and the diaconate, so we can know what to look for in the survey itself.

In the U.F.M.C.C., we have international By-laws. These By-laws (Attachment No. 1) are all of 18 pages long, and outline our doctrine, our understanding of the sacraments, ministry and polity. They are binding on every local M.C.C. and may be amended at any General Conference (every two years). Article IV of the By-laws is the statement on ministry (currently under major revision by the Fellowship Commission on Government, Structures and Systems). Section C proposes two orders of lay ministry under the direction of the local congregation. The first order is "Deacons": and it reads

"1. Deacons:

a. **QUALIFICATIONS:** The deacons are an historic office of service in the Church whose qualifications are indicated in I Timothy 3:8-14. Their purpose is to serve their local congregations under the jurisdiction of their pastors. Considering the great responsibilities and duties of the deacons, it is desirable that they not serve on the Board of Directors or in other church administrative offices.

b. **REQUIREMENTS:** Deacons shall be members in good standing of their local church and be persons of spiritual mind, exemplary lives, joyful outlook, sound judgement and of proven dedicated service. Appropriate training for deacons must be provided by the pastor, or persons chosen by him/her, prior to any appointment to the position of deacon. All persons appointed by the pastor as deacons shall be approved by the local Board of Directors. The pastor and Board of Directors may review the appointment annually or at their discretion. The term of office for deacons shall be for three years. Persons may be reappointed at the end of any term.

c. **DUTIES:** Deacons shall minister to those in need; the sick, the friendless, and those persons who may be in distress in accordance with the spiritual duties of the office. The duties may, if necessary and circumstances dictate, include administering the rites and sacraments under the authorization and under the direction of their pastor.

d. **DISCIPLINE:** The pastor, together with a majority of the full Board of Directors, may vote to remove from office any deacon from disloyalty, unbecoming conduct, or dereliction of duty. The pastor, together with a majority of the full Board of Directors, may impose for cause such lesser discipline as they may deem appropriate.

e. Any specific matters of congregational approval or appeal not contained herein are left up to local church option." ¹

The description is couched in "By-laws" language, rather than contemporary theological language, and though that seemed very appropriate at the time, it is clear to me now that it is deficient in many respects. Certainly, there is a concern (appropriate, I believe) for grounding the office of deacon in the scripture and tradition of the Church. However, I Timothy is not the best example of that, from my point of view; (see Chapter 1) and a literal reading of it can be a little puzzling for gay people (especially the "husband of one wife" part). On the other hand, the rather simple one-sentence summary of the diaconate is not so far off the track: "their purpose is to *serve the local congregation* under the jurisdiction of their pastors." Also, under "requirements," the final one reads, "and of proven dedicated service." Under the duties, the first on the list is to "*minister to those in need.*" Worship (under sacraments and rites) is secondary in the list of duties, which seems to emphasize the diakonia of the diaconate, rather than the ceremonial function.

White U.F.M.C.C. deacons are appointed, not ordained, they are permitted to administer (not just assist in) the rites and sacraments, "under the authorization and under the direction of their pastor." This really reflects the eclectic ecclesiology of M.C.C. I know of no other denomination that has a set-apart clergy that permits someone of a non-ordained, appointed office to administer rites and sacraments, usually reserved for the ordained. It really seems to be an admixture of the Baptist/Catholic extremes, but also something unique. Thus the right to consecrate (the most touchy area!) is not reserved to the

ordained or soon-to-be ordained, but may be performed by those functioning for a limited time in an appointed role. It is also interesting that the "spiritual" duties are emphasized in an office that is clearly not meant to be a "stepping stone" to the professional ministry.² Now, that was either an attempt to "please everyone" in a smorgasbord ecclesiology, or a real act of genius and inspiration on the part of By-laws authors. The one thing that seemed to ultimately divide clergy and laity in the catholic/hierarchical tradition was the "right" to consecrate. That is not so in M.C.C.

The second order of lay ministry is called "Exhorter," which is a student minister, a soon-to-be clergy, and meant to be a stepping stone. In a proposed revised Article IV of the U.F.M.C.C. By-laws, there will again be two orders of lay ministry. This time one will be "the priesthood of all believers," (all Church members) and the other will be the diaconate. Exhorters will be counted among the clergy. This seems to me to better reflect reality, and it emphasizes that ministry is for every Christian. It also clarifies the difference between an exhorter and a deacon, and more clearly emphasizes that deacons are lay people. The General Conference will be examining these ideas at the next meeting.

The By-laws description seems limiting to me, especially the section entitled "duties." It seems to stress nurture to the exclusion of all other kinds of ministry. It also gives no clues as to the possible content of a training program.

The only other extant U.F.M.C.C. document which has been approved by the General Conference and which speaks of a theology of ministry and ecclesiology is the report of the Commission on Faith, Fellowship and Order to the 1976 General Conference, which contains six important questions and their tentative answers (See Attachment No. 2). This document was a product of the "grassroots-study-model-method" which I believe is unique to M.C.C. We are the only denomination I know of (we are small enough so we can do it!), that has produced its first theological statement by asking all its local Churches, members and adherents to answer the six questions individually, and in small groups, and has then compiled them and asked for feedback; and then *re*-compiled them for final drafting and approval at General Conference -- a process which took three years. The answers to the six questions came from the people of the U.F.M.C.C., not from the scholars or from the magisterium first. Input from scholars, and church leaders was sought, but only as a part of the process.

The Faith, Fellowship and Order Report of 1976 says several things about the Church. It claims that the Church is "the living Body of Christ"; the continuation of the incarnation."³ It says that the Church's mission involves "the creating and sustaining of our community."⁴ There are two dynamics operating in M.C.C.'s identity as a Church -- the idea of *inclusivity* (that all people are God's children, and all are part of the Body, that no one should be turned away), and the idea of *election*. The Faith, Fellowship and Order paper states that the idea of election must be based on Jesus' model, which is that election equals servanthood. The church is the place in which we come to know that "all are oppressed and are in need of God's liberation."⁵

Further, the Faith, Fellowship and Order report describes five basic role-functions of the Church; that is:

- 1) Structure times, places and resources for reflection on ultimate concerns, and for corporate celebration of the relevance, power and authority of the Gospel to transform lives and peoples; worship, and a flexible, dynamic approach to education must lie at the heart of our ministry.
- 2) Structure an environment in which community and personhood may flourish: where people are free to ask, "Where have we come from? Who are we? Where are we going?" where people can experience the process of acceptance, healing, growth, challenge and commitment; where people can realize the free gift of the grace of God-in-Christ, and be challenged to true discipleship.
- 3) Assume a stance of advocacy for all oppressed peoples, making clear the connection between gay persons and all persons, between gay oppression and all oppression -- and finding in Jesus Christ the chief Advocate of all the earth's peoples.
- 4) Honestly explore and develop our understandings of ethics and lifestyle in relationship to the Gospel.
- 5) Do the day-in, day-out work of love and caring by reaching out and serving the very complex and pluralistic community around us.

That is the closest thing we have in the U.F.M.C.C. to a theology of ministry or ecclesiology.

Notice what stands out in the report and By-laws together: "service," "servanthood," "liberation," "healing," "community." It is clear to me that the word "diakonos" or "servanthood" is not only

Jesus' model of ministry, but it is at the heart of M.C.C.'s self-understanding as well. We are a church-founded-in-the-service of liberation.

While M.C.C. clearly reflects the "Servant" model of the Church proposed by Avery Dulles⁷, our model is also sacramental⁸ in the sense that we identify the Church with Christ's incarnation. The Church is a "sacrament" of Christ; the Church is to continue Christ's servanthood in the world. If Christ is the diakonos of our salvation, then the Church is to also be the diakonos of that same salvation, of that same Christ. It is the Church's diakonos or ministry that is at stake. All offices, all institutions, all roles and charisms are to enable the diakonos of the Church. If they don't do that, they become trivial, or only ceremonial or even demonic.⁹

Jesus Christ was/is our Deacon. In turn he calls us to a life of diakonos.

A deacon as an appointee to an ecclesiastical office must be set aside for the enabling of the Church's diakonos. They must then somehow be prepared to help the church be able to do those five role-functions listed above. Is that what really happens?

The Survey

In the winter of 1979, I began to seriously consider the diaconate. I decided that it was still a puzzle to me. I began exploring my own view, and decided to survey the Fellowship at the same time. I then applied what I was learning on my own and from the Fellowship to my own diaconate training program.

The survey was sent out in early Spring (3 copies to every M.C.C.) (See Attachment No. 3). I received 40 responses from almost as many churches, out of a possible 120 groups in existence at the time. I did not ask general questions about theological perspective or "model" of the church, but concentrated on the diaconate itself.

The survey was filled out by 17 pastors, eight deacons, six worship coordinators (laypeople), four deacon candidates, three lay persons and two assistant pastors, or, in other words, by 19 clergy and 21 lay people. The respondents represented 24 Chartered Churches, 11 Missions and five Study Groups.¹⁰ Twenty four of the respondents had deacons in their Churches (since, at this time only Chartered Churches may appoint deacons). Ten out of the 24 only had one deacon, 12 had two to five deacons; one church had nine and another had 16. Thus, 22 out of 24 had five or fewer deacons; only four churches responding had had a deacon serve for more than five years (eight years was the longest). Over 18 had served from one to four years (deacons are appointed for a three-year term). Below are the results of the survey:

Question No. 1 "What is the role of the deacon in the U.F.M.C.C.? The responses indicated that many people confuse *role* definition (an overreaching, general description of the expectations) with specific functions or tasks. The following are the results: The role of deacon is to:

Assist the Pastor	14 responses
Visit the sick & shut-in	14 responses
A Lay Minister	10 responses
Listen to/meet congregational needs	8 responses
Assist with worship	6 responses
Distribute goods (food, etc.)	6 responses
Spiritual development of Church	5 responses
Specific duties determined by talents	5 responses
Counsel	5 responses
Be an example	4 responses
Preach	3 responses
Handle Outreach	3 responses
Administer rites & Sacraments	2 responses
Be a mediator	2 responses
Greet new people	2 responses
Stepping Stone to Professional Ministry	1 response
A Witness	1 response
Minister to Pastor	1 response
Altar Assignment	1 response
Bookstore Manager	1 response

In weeding out those answers that propose a specific task, those answers that seem to indicate a *role* can be reduced as follows:

Assistant to the Pastor	14 responses
Lay Minister	10 responses
Congregational Sounding Board	8 responses
Spiritual developer	5 responses
Example	4 responses
Servant	3 responses
Stepping Stone	2 responses

From this, we see that most respondents see the diaconate in a ministerial role. Overall, the balance is tipped toward priestly rather than prophetic or "temporal" concerns. (Notice that the By-laws discourage the deacon from taking on "administrative" duties.) That is especially true with the inclusion of "Example" as part of the role definition. (Perhaps coming from By-laws requirement of an "exemplary life.") There is apparently a clear connection in the minds of most respondents between the role of the pastor and the role of the deacon (the old Bishop/deacon relationship). This part of the survey made me realize that the first question I should have asked is "What is the role of the pastor?", and then perhaps, "the role of the Board." Obviously, in the opinion of the respondents, the role of the deacon is more directly tied to the pastor than to the Board.

This fact made me realize that if the early church had a triangle power struggle between the Bishop, deacons and presbyters, that triangle is sometimes repeated in M.C.C. pastor, deacon and Board interactions. Over and over again, there are conflicts between these three parties in M.C.C. churches, partly, I fear, over a lack of clear role definitions and limitations; or over questions of accountability, or, out-and-out power struggles.

Question No. 3 "What functions do deacons perform in your church or District?" This question was the one meant to elicit specific task assignments of deacons. I simplistically divided the functions into those related to *worship* and those related to *service*. First I will just list them with the number of times they were mentioned totally in all the surveys:

Worship functions of Deacons:

All aspects of worship	13 responses
Serve Communion	18 responses
Read Scripture	11 responses
Set up Altar	10 responses
Preach	9 responses
Assist at Communion/acolyte	9 responses
Prayer	6 responses
"Other Parts" (Call to Worship, responsive readings, etc.)	6 responses
Usher	4 responses
Consecrate Communion	3 responses
Offering	3 responses
Music	3 responses
Liturgist	2 responses
Bring Communion to the sick	2 responses

(Planning Worship was not mentioned)

Service functions of Deacons:

Visitation	15 responses
Counselling	14 responses
Helping sick and needy	13 responses
Distribute goods	8 responses
Hospital visitation	7 responses
Welcome visitors	7 responses
Teach	6 responses
Shepherding (inreach, congregational needs)	5 responses
Prison ministry	5 responses
"Anything"	4 responses
Reaching out to the lonely	3 responses

New member preparation	2 responses
Convalescent Home Ministry	2 responses
Prayer requests	2 responses
Bible Study	2 responses
Ministry to the deaf	1 response
Housing	1 response
Organizational Strategy for the Church	1 response
Contact with other groups	1 response
Providing rides to Church	1 response
Visit other MCCs	1 response
"Protect Pastor"	1 response
Prayer group	1 response
Social Service referral	1 response
Speakers bureau	1 response
Holy Union preparation	1 response
Bar Ministry	1 response
Newsletter	1 response
Committees	1 response
"Keep congregation happy"	1 response
District involvement	1 response
Social Action	1 response
Take care of flowers (for worship)	1 response

If we total up the responses and divide them into the five areas of Church role-function defined by the Faith, Fellowship and Order report (excluding worship) this is what we come up with:

HEALING MINISTRY	ADVOCACY	ETHICS/LIFESTYLE	DAY-TO-DAY
Counselling	Social Action	Teach	Visitation
Hospital visitation	Speakers Bureau	Bar Ministry	Sick and Needy
Lonely	Contact with groups	Holy Union Prep.	Distribute goods
Convalescent Homes	Prison Ministry	Bible Study	Welcome Visitors
27 Responses	5 Responses	10 Responses	Shepherding
			"Anything"
			New Member Prep
			Prayer requests
			Housing
			Organizational
			Strategy
			Rides to Church
			Visit MCCs
			Social Service
			Referral
			Newsletter
			Committees
			District
			64 Responses

This apportionment (overwhelmingly toward the priestly role and overwhelmingly Institutional) seems to be consistent with how most Churches view the diaconate, and with the Fellowship By-laws. Only the description of the diaconate in the Presbyterian Church speaks of social action of advocacy as a possible concern for deacons. In a way, one would hope that M.C.C. could pick up on that avenue of service, and understand social action, systems assistance, in dealing with realities of sexism, racism and classism and nationalism as ministry and service. This should be especially obvious in M.C.C. Even in M.C.C., in which we have consistently put ourselves on the line for human rights, we tend to separate the priestly functions of ministry from the prophetic and social functions. This leads me to believe that many people still do not see social action, *advocacy*, as ministry. The exhaustive listing seems to place a heavy emphasis on one-to-one needs meeting or on the maintenance of the local church needs. Again, is that a function of the role of the M.C.C. minister? Could it be true that in many of our Churches there is such an overwhelming need for counselling, healing and one-to-one attention, that the pastor

sees in a deacon or two an opportunity to alleviate the crushing load of counselling? Or is it that the pastor themselves primarily views ministry as nurturing, and does that affect how they limit the role of the deacon?

Ministry, in most of our congregations, it seems, is really viewed as nurture and not as service. A "good" Church then becomes one "Where my needs are met," not "Where I am empowered and challenged to serve."

I wonder if, in oppressed communities, there is a temptation to limit ministry to nurture because of those overwhelming needs for affirmation, love, acceptance, caring and healing. I have heard over and over again that many M.C.C. churches become crisis oriented, or become oriented around the immediate needs of very needy people. But that orientation often further ghettoises the particular M.C.C. church, and it essentially becomes self-serving.¹² This model of M.C.C. ministry is the "hospital" model. M.C.C. is at times itself a hospital for very wounded people. The problem occurs when that is *all* the church is about, when there is no concern or interest expressed in the wider community, in the world, in social and communal issues. Thus the Church preaches and lives only half the Gospel. ("You are my witness in Jerusalem, maybe Judea, but forget Samaria and the ends of the earth!") In this sense, the survey seems to bear out a dominant image of the deacon as a nurturer. However, it was refreshing to at least see social action, speakers bureau, organizational strategy and prison ministry mentioned as possible concerns for deacons. This is particularly true when prison ministry means more than one-to-one writing and visitation, but also means taking on the political and ethical struggles around the whole criminal justice system.

Questions four and five asked about training, namely, "What kind of training do deacons undergo?" and "Who does the training?" About one half of the respondents trained the deacon before they were installed, despite the fact that the By-laws specifically mandate that appropriate training be done beforehand. Those training sessions lasted anywhere from two weeks to one year (three and six months were the most popular time spans). About ten respondents said they offered "on-going" training of some kind. Only about half of the respondents offered to describe the content of their training program, some including the whole program in a packet. Half of the respondents gave no clue whatsoever as to what a training program (beforehand or on-going) might include. About 15 said that the pastor did the training; four said the assistant pastor did it; one said the staff ministers did the training; and others didn't specify. Of those who said pastors did the training (15), six also indicated that others were involved in the process (out speakers, professional counsellors, Samaritan Theological Institute, other staff members and deacons).

The content of the training programs included as follows:

Sermon preparation	3 responses
Sacraments and rites	4 responses
Altar set up	1 response
Visiting	4 responses
Bible Study	8 responses
Death and dying	2 responses
Prayer	3 responses
Counselling	7 responses
Doctrine	2 responses
Leading small groups	1 response
Retreats	1 response
S.T.I. correspondence	1 response
By-laws	2 responses
Practice	2 responses
"Comprehensive"	1 response
Book reports	1 response
Supervision	1 response
Evangelism	1 response
Inclusive language	1 response
Public speaking	1 response
Administration	1 response
Ushering	1 response

The training program question told me a lot. Bible study was the highest mentioned in terms of training content, and yet teaching Bible was low in terms of expected duties. There is little about how the Bible training will be used. Counselling training was mentioned, but there was little mention of

supervision of that counselling. Most of the training was vague -- a little of this and a little of that. There was little actual realistic training of people for actual service, for particular tasks. The list of expectations of deacons is very specific and thorough-going. But the training is vague. This combination is likely to be disastrous in the long run.

We have no statistics on the drop-out rate of deacons, or on the rate of completion of a three-year appointment. My suspicion is that very few persons have actually completed a three-year term, in proportion to the number appointed. One of the major factors in this drop-out rate would be inadequate training and too many ill-defined expectations. The survey clearly points to this problem.

Question 5 "What questions/problems, if any, do you experience in relationship to the diaconate in M.C.C.?" This was one of the best questions, just an opportunity for people to express their real concerns. The following is a list of their comments:

- "Deacons seem to lose interest quickly."
- "If deacons want to be ministers they should become exhorters."
- "We need to weed out those with 'collar fever'."
- "We need to learn how to prevent burnout, set limits."
- "Lack of Fellowship-wide standardization in instruction, requirements and outline for service."
- "What about a lifetime commitment for deacons?"
- "What about ordination for local church office?"
- "We miss the New Testament point about servanthood in diverse forms."
- "Funny people in funny costumes . . ."
- "We tend to 'downgrade' the diaconate to that of usher and janitor -- it is a historic office."
- "I Timothy is being overlooked."
- "Different definitions, much misunderstanding."
- "They have a tendency to become haughty."
- "They get frustrated -- with the wish to be pastor."
- "Need for deacons in Missions and Study Groups."
- "High rate of turnover."
- "Get blamed for Church problems."
- "Inadequate training."
- "What does it mean to be 'the eyes and ears of the pastor?'"
- "What should I be doing?"
- "Deacons are human too."
- "Is the deacon more than one who serves?"
- "Is it a lay designation? Consecration?"
- "Some deacons want only to participate in worship -- not in service."
- "What about deacons who move to another church?"
- "Not seen as a lay position."
- "Lack of time -- too much to do."
- "What about full-time deacons?"
- "Much personal sacrifice required."
- "Need to bring diaconate into U.F.M.C.C. and present-day context."
- "Super-clergy."
- "A political force in the church."

Many of those responses occurred several times, especially problems with training and the deacon's role. I was really intrigued by the question (and its underlying assumptions) "Is a deacon *more* than (just?) one who serves?" The message of the Gospel is clear that there is *no* higher calling than to be a servant, something we still do not believe and live. We still all yearn, like the disciples James and John to sit at the Lord's right and left, at the place of honor. But true diakonos calls us beyond such longings.

Is a deacon in M.C.C. one who enables the diakonos of the local church? Maybe. Sometimes. In some cases, frustrated pastors seem to have the attitude that deacons were more trouble than they were worth; and frustrated deacons felt either under-used or in a vacuum of real ministry.

Based on some of these observations I began thinking about a diaconate training program for M.C.C. local churches, described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

Local Church Deacon Training Program

By the Spring (March) of 1979 I came to believe that the office of deacon basically exists to meet the ministry (diakonos) needs of a local church. Therefore, the number of deacons, their precise duties, and maybe even their length of service will differ from place to place, from church to church, from deacon to deacon. In that sense, I am against rigid standardization in the Fellowship, although I am for providing sample programs, guidelines and the accrued "collective wisdom" of the Fellowship for churches that are struggling with the diaconate. The diaconate, in its earliest history, I believe, and according to our By-laws, is a *local*, that is, indigenous office.

Based on that belief, and at the encouragement and request of several local church members, I put out a call for those interested in a deacons' training program. There was an excellent response. My sense was, also, that in anticipation of an impending pastoral vacancy (mine) that the church might well have need for several deacons whose primary responsibility would be to enable the church to continue with its ministry during the pastoral vacancy; to provide additional support for the Interim Worship Coordinator (the pulpit committee was his primary support group); to function as a core group of lay ministers within the midst of the church. Secondly, they would be prepared to function in all aspects of worship (but each to varying degrees based on ability); they would all be expected to nurture the present members of the church during "the transition" (as it came to be known); and finally, they would all choose an area in which they would give their gifts and enhance the diakonos of the church. This final expectation would prove to be the most important, probably.

Their training, as I first conceived it (as I reviewed the survey, and consulted with congregational members, the staff, and other M.C.C. ministers) would include: 1) an intensification of their education concerning *what it means to be a Christian*, including the sources of our faith; 2) what does it mean to be a gay Christian? to be a member of the U.F.M.C.C.?; 3) developing a sensitivity to contemporary theological and social issues that impinge upon us; 4) becoming adequately versed in the rubrics and theology of worship, including the ability to share one's faith, to preach and serve communion; 5) the ability to listen, to counsel, to refer when necessary, and 6) the process of choosing an area of special concern and expertise. I also came to believe that there had to be a screening process involving the pastor, the board, the congregation and the Holy Spirit (hopefully). We would have to look for signs of "collar fever," as it is called, those whose call is not to diakonos, but to serving unhealthy ego needs at the expense of the congregation. I believed that if we were honest, those problems would become apparent, and we would have the courage to face them (I had certainly had to face them before with staff and board members). I believed that we would discover that there is an *economy* in every church: an economy of needs and gifts. If we are obedient, and listen to the Spirit speaking within us, the needs of the church would all be met by the gifts of the members. That's simply my theology of stewardship. There is an economy and a balance. If a church's needs are not met, if it is not doing the ministry it is called to because it doesn't have the resources, then it is because someone is holding out -- is withholding the gifts (charisms) God has given them to give. And that isn't healthy. I came to believe that as our local church was beginning to prepare for a time when there would be great need for healing, for courage, for vision and hope, God was also preparing individuals with the charisms to meet those needs.

I began the deacon training program by sharing some of my beliefs, asking for confirmation, for feedback. I shared with them that I expected there would also be an economy of numbers -- that we would have not too many and not too few deacons; that all areas of ministry in the church would be touched; that there would be a diversity of types of people, women and men, different backgrounds, perspectives, experiences, theologies and politics and personalities. I fully expected to see what Paul speaks of as the "varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit." Amazingly, for the most part, that is what happened.

There were also some very real dilemmas. First of all, the program should have taken six months, and we barely had three months. We really covered six months of material in three months, which was exhausting for all of us. We met for three hours every weeknight, and two days for eight hours each day. That was not enough time for people to absorb everything. We knew that when we started -- but I felt I could not delay my leaving any longer, and I did not want to eliminate anything from the program.

Also, it was a real risk for the church. As it was, I had given my notice eight months before I left (an unusually long time in M.C.C.). We were trying to deal conscientiously with my leaving, and the pastoral transition. I was phasing myself out of counselling, and program involvement as much as possible (which coincided with my need to finish my course work at seminary). It seemed counter to the process to begin a new project of training deacons. Plus, the Interim Worship Coordinator, and not myself, would have to supervise these new deacons and a new pastor would have to inherit them (for

at least a few years). What if the new pastor's ideas and expectations were different? I struggled with whether or not it was my "parting shot," my effort to extend my influence beyond my termination date as pastor. I'm sure my motives were mixed. Leaving that Church was hard. I viewed the training program as my last (and, actually) one of my better gifts to that congregation.

After discussing it with the Board, we decided that it was worth the risk, and I went ahead with the training program. An intensive lay ministry training program (even if it bore no new deacons) could help maintain continuity and energy through the summer and into the fall as the congregation prepared to elect a new pastor. It might also lead the Church in some new directions.

The Training Program I developed was based on the following six principles:

- 1) **HONESTY AND REALITY:** It is important to be honest with people about what is and what will be expected of them, from the beginning. I would rather frighten people away than manipulate them into making a decision that they are not fully informed enough to make. I told these candidates about the risks they were taking; that I was not guaranteeing that any of them would be appointed as deacons, even if they passed the program. They were reminded that I would not be around to supervise them once they became deacons. I was honest about the level of competency I expected, and the strenuousness of the program.
- 2) **BEGIN WITH THE BASICS:** Deacons training, in my opinion, should begin with the reviewing the sources of our faith and life as Christians: the Bible, Church history, personal experience, knowledge about the world we live in. I believe deacons should be well grounded and encouraged to read and pursue continuing education in all matters pertaining to faith and ministry.
- 3) **TOO MUCH, NOT TOO LITTLE:** I think that oversaturation of materials rather than underestimating the candidates abilities is more challenging. If they are presented with more material than they can absorb in a short period of time, they can always go back and review and reread.
- 4) **SUPERVISION:** Along with the program, I had individual conferences with the candidates at least twice. The conference involved individual spiritual direction, and counselling, and helping the person search honestly within themselves to find their gifts. We dealt with their fears and hopes about being a deacon.
- 5) **SERVICE AND WHOLENESS:** We tried to stress the need to be a whole person, and to deal with others as whole people: not just as minds, or bodies, or categories, but as whole persons. We spent time talking about our prayer lives, our own journeys of faith, our own struggles with being a Christian in a world that seeks to pervert that reality. We dealt with group problems, conflicts and issues of trust and caring. We faced the fact that we didn't all initially like or trust each other. Nor did we automatically believe in the validity of one another's callings. We had to be honest with each other, and strive for wholeness in our relationships.
- 6) **GIFTS ARE FOR GIVING:** Above and beyond the minimal expectations of a deacon (in service and worship assistance) what myself and the Board and the congregation were concerned about was *their own sense of how their gifts (charisms) would be channelled to enable the diakonos ministry of liberation of the local church.* This means encouraging initiative, creativity, adaptability and sacrifice.

I taught most of the training program myself, but brought in other people as well. I asked the one previously appointed deacon to share with us frequently; I asked several lay people in the congregation to teach areas such as counselling, prison ministry, areas of ministry to those with substance abuse problems, racism and sexism, and administration as ministry. Reverend Troy Perry visited us during this time, and I required them to sit in on his workshop of "Homosexuality and the Bible" and "The U.F.M.C.C. Today" (which included the history of M.C.C. as well). As for my part of the training program, please refer to Attachment 4. I felt it was very important that in addition to a passing acquaintance with the content of the Bible, that they have some idea of the various approaches to Scripture. I chose Bernard Anderson's book, *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible*, and several articles (see Attachment 4), for that purpose. I found that the only person in the group who was not Biblically illiterate was someone from a fundamentalist background, who had to go through a re-learning process. Also, as a member of M.C.C., and potential deacons, I knew they had to be prepared (actually, drilled) to be able to answer the question, "But doesn't the Bible condemn homosexuality?" I required that, in this case, they be able to name all six scripture passages which are purported to speak about homosexuality, and that they be able to specifically refute the claims that the Bible condemns homosexuality; and that they be able

to point to Scriptures that support the truth that God loves all people, and shows no partiality. As deacons, they will be looked upon as representatives of M.C.C., and will be asked by both struggling gay Christians and fundamentalists alike to give an account of themselves and M.C.C.'s stand. They must be able to tie together their knowledge of scripture and their own personal testimony of God's love for them. No one could be appointed a deacon who could not pass both a written and oral exam in this area. (See Attachments 5 & 6).

I had a lot of fun teaching the section on "Vocabularies of Faith." This is an original concept of mine that I developed especially for this program. (See lecture notes in Attachment 4). One of our biggest problems and opportunities in M.C.C. is the tremendous divergence in our religious and denominational backgrounds. Because of that, we often do not learn that there are many Christian vocabularies (or idioms). Some people use one vocabulary exclusively, others combine them.

My premise is that people in M.C.C. need to develop ecumenical Christian vocabularies, and thus become theologically "multilingual." We need to be able to hear and speak about our faith in many vocabularies. We need to dare to invent new vocabularies of our own. I identified for the deacon candidates at least 15 Christian vocabularies and the most familiar words/concepts in each idiom. We then attempted to contrast and compare the vocabularies. I asked the deacon candidates to identify their own vocabulary, and then to attempt to learn to speak in another (and hopefully very unfamiliar) vocabulary. We began to find out that sometimes people used the *same* words to mean different things; sometimes they used different words to say the same things; sometimes they used different words and mean different things. Some of the vocabularies seemed to have natural affinities; others seemed almost to be mutually exclusive and opposing.

That whole concept of "vocabularies of faith" really seemed to excite the candidates. They began to understand the genesis of some of their communication problems with each other. They began to loosen up, and to discover new ways of communicating their own faith. And they began to be able to "hear past" words and phrases that had previously been a communication barrier.

We discovered that faith-sharing is a real ministry all its own. In order to do that, we need to become not only good listeners, but theologically multi-lingual. We even discovered that there is an M.C.C. vocabulary.

It was because of this "vocabulary of faith" idea that church history, and even Biblical language came alive for some of the candidates for the first time. Suddenly, they got in touch with why some words turned them off and others opened them up.

The two all-day sessions were also quite rewarding. The first one we spent talking about Christian discipleship, and the meaning of "diakonos" and the diaconate. Several people shared new ideas about it. We discussed the gifts of the Spirit, and everyday gifts. I began to challenge them to look into themselves. What gifts did they have? Compare your perceptions of yourself and your gifts to the economy of our Church - what does our Church need? We did role-playing and serious faith-sharing. We used some of the questions from "The Deacon's Guide to Worship" (Attachment 7) as a beginning point. There were moments of self-discovery. We spent the day at someone's home to experience a non-academic setting, in a living room atmosphere. We shared about what it really means to follow Jesus. I asked them to use that day as a model of a spiritual support group, which I hoped they could become for each other.

The other all-day experience revolved around worship. I prepared (with the help from three exhorters) a "Deacon's Guide to Worship," which gave samples of order of worship for the rites and sacraments.

We went over what worship is, the liturgical year, and I had them practice doing all of the rites and sacraments (we had to extend this class, as I remember). Also, they each had to prepare a five-minute homily which they gave to the rest of us outdoors, in the park across from the Church office (for some of them, it was really their first public speaking experience -- and it was very public). We critiqued all the homilies and talked about the deacon's role in worship. All came to understand that they had to have the minimum competency to perform the rites and sacraments and to give a homily if called upon (all at the discretion of the Worship Coordinator or Pastor). In M.C.C., because many of our small groups are without pastors, deacons are asked by the District to occasionally travel to other church groups to lead worship, preach and consecrate Communion. Much like the early Church, they have functioned as missionaries (in fact, one of our Districts actually has named some "missionary deacons.").

The candidates came to accept that some of us were more dynamic speakers than others; some of us had worship charisms and others did not. That would probably determine which of them would be called upon in that capacity, and how frequently.

In helping them learn to do the rites and sacraments, I had to both help them de-mystify them, and yet learn to value and hold them even more sacred. That is true freedom in worship. Worship is not meant to be "funny people in funny costumes" who have magic fingers and special privileges that common ordinary lay folk do not have. Leading worship is enabling the community to joyfully worship the One God, and experience in that worship an empowerment for service on behalf of the One God.

At the beginning of the training sessions, I had presented seven people to the Board as deacon candidates. After the training session was completed, tests passed, each deacon candidate, in consultation with me, chose an area of special service. Then I presented each of them to the Board, with the understanding that they were accountable to the pastor and Board, and through them to the congregation, to enable the ministry of this local M.C.C. The Board voted on each person and approved my seven appointments.

On my last Sunday as pastor, I installed seven deacons, whose special areas of diakonos were: Christian Education development, Evangelism, Communications, Social Action, Prison Ministry, Drama and Innovative Worship, and Visitation Program development. They were all robed, and were given stoles with symbols of their choice (representing their service area). They all participated in the worship service that evening.

CHAPTER 5

Evaluations, Recommendations and Conclusions about the Diaconate in U.F.M.C.C.

EVALUATION:

Most of the evaluation was in the form of feedback from the deacon candidates themselves. They felt the training program tried to cover too much too fast. They also felt that in the urgency to cover much material, discussion time was too limited.

Some deacons said they did not feel they had enough practice in relationship to worship: they still felt uncomfortable in leading. Others felt that we should have spent more time (with supervision) in areas of counselling. I recommended that each of them take one of the many weekend seminars given around the city in Crisis Counselling/Suicide Prevention.

My evaluation process was really limited by my leaving the city -- I had no real opportunity to evaluate their performance in the role of deacon. In general, however, the six months of transition after my leaving was a relatively energetic, positive time for the church, with much cooperation and determination to keep growing and ministering. Some of this I would like to attribute to the training of those seven persons and the active role they all played in the transition.

Reverend Jay Deacon, Editor of *The Gay Christian*, (in conversations with me) also challenged me in two areas: he thinks we need to develop stronger contracting and accountability. It may take longer than three months for a person to determine their real gifts and aptitudes. Should there be a written agreement between the deacon and the Church, outlining their areas of service? He also questions the whole "installation process." Do robes and stoles reinforce the "ceremonial" rather than the service role of deacons? Also, how is the congregation involved? In some M.C.C.'s after the Board approves them, they must be approved by a congregational vote. Is this wise? Is it necessary?

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The following are my personal recommendations to the U.F.M.C.C. regarding the diaconate:

1) *Development of Theology of Ministry*: I would recommend that the Commission on Faith, Fellowship and Order consider among its priorities the exploration of a theology of ministry, including the priesthood of all believers, and the rationale for lay and professional ministry. Included in this exploration should be some thinking through of the meaning and theology of ordination in the U.F.M.C.C. I would also recommend that the theological language that results be used to *improve* and update (make contemporary) the language about deacons in Article IV of the U.F.M.C.C. By-laws.

2) *Development of a U.F.M.C.C. ecclesiology*: This is essentially the work of the Commission on Government, Structures and Systems. I support the viewpoint that the Commission was not called into being to put band aids on our structure, but to critique it totally, and to help us intentionally shape the future life and ministry and polity of the U.F.M.C.C. I support their interim proposed revision of Article IV, which re-emphasized the diaconate as a lay office. Further, at this point I do not support the ordination of deacons, at least not until we understand the meaning of ordination. Since so few people have survived three years in the diaconate, I think it would be a mistake to, at this point, ordain them (that assumes a lifetime commitment). The three year appointment assures accountability, it provides a relatively easy way for someone to take time off from this service, and it does not confuse the layperson/clergy issue. It also does not play into the "diaconate as a stepping stone to the professional ministry" idea, which the U.F.M.C.C. By-laws reject.

At the same time, I would like our Government, Structures and Systems Commission to look at the newly revised Roman Catholic permanent diaconate. Over the next ten years, I would like M.C.C. to consider that as a *future* possibility, once we have had more experience. At this point, a person may still be a deacon continually if they are reappointed (and if they do not change Churches frequently).

Also, in the matter of deacons wearing collars, it is simply *not* true that one needs a collar to get into a hospital or prison to visit. Many Baptist and Pentecostal ministers and deacons have done that for years without ever wearing a collar. In this vein, I also recommend to the U.F.M.C.C. that we abolish the wearing of collars by deacons. The only ones who will miss them too much, in my opinion, will be those who like them for the wrong reasons.

I also really am opposed to *too* much standardization of structure at this point (or perhaps ever). I envision M.C.C. continuing to have an indigenous diaconate, tailored to meet the ministry needs of the local Church. This seems to be both highly contemporary and Biblical. I hope that we never structure

it so that it fails to be a local office. In that context, my understanding is that it is the Church that puts forth the call for deacons and then persons respond to the call. It should not be, in my opinion, that an individual wants to be a deacon and the Church accommodates *their* need. In this sense it is different from those who feel an individual call to the professional ministry. This understanding may help weed out those who *really* feel called to the professional ministry, but who want to take a short cut to that through the diaconate.

3) *Deacon Training*: I recommend that the Fellowship provide a *Resource Packet for the Diaconate* that will include:

1. Overview of the history and tradition of the diaconate.
2. U.F.M.C.C. materials on the diaconate, Theology of Ministry.
3. Several models of the diaconate, statements by active, experienced deacons.
4. Several sample training programs; sample reporting forms, contracts, etc.
5. Suggestions for installation, appropriate vestments when desired.

I would hope that this paper might become a basis for such a packet. Also, Samaritan Theological Institute has several excellent correspondence courses to supplement a good diaconate program, particularly "Introduction to the Bible," and "Homosexuality and the Bible." Samaritan Theological Institute also provides many excellent seminars (particularly on "worship" and "Inclusive Language") and an extension program that you may request be offered in your District or at your local Church.

I do not think that deacons can be fully and adequately trained in less than six months. I also think that a continuing education program for deacons is essential.

One-to-one supervision is the only way I know of to really screen individuals applying for the diaconate, and also to help with remedial needs, or to help an individual really and honestly explore their ministry in the Church. It may seem time consuming, but I found it to be well worth the time spent. An excellent tool for one-to-one supervision is the "Case Study Method," offered by James Glasse in *Putting It Together In The Parish*.¹ I have used this method with deacons and exhorters. Use as many resources as are available to you, in the Fellowship and in the community: do not cheat your future deacons out of an opportunity to grow and learn.

Involve former or presently serving deacons to share with the candidates. Involve the Board of Directors in the training process if possible, as they will be asked to approve the pastor's appointments.

CONCLUSIONS:

Perhaps no other ecclesiastical office, or church position has been surrounded by so much confusion. On the other hand, I firmly believe that the diaconate provides some of our *best* opportunities for innovation, experimentation and really questioning and reflecting about the nature of the Church and its ministry. We are *free*, in our Fellowship, to explore the meaning of diakonos, in all its fullness. There are incredible opportunities all around us for service, for enabling liberation.

I have found myself getting impatient in the past over deacons I appointed who wanted to be led around by the nose, who had to be told what to do. I've also seen deacons frustrated by pastors who think the only role of a deacon is to read the Gospel and polish the candleabra. We are free! Free to serve, to give, to risk, to be a sign of liberation among a people who have internalized oppression. A deacon in M.C.C. should be a real, down-to-earth living reminder of that freedom.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER 1:

- 1 McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible*, New York, 1965, p. 182
- 2 Hardy, "Deacons in History and Practice," from Nolan, *The Deaconate Now*, Washington, D.C., 1968, p. 15
- 3 Echlin, *The Deacon in the Church*, Alba House, 1971, p. 4
- 4 Echlin, p. 4
- 5 Boer, *A Short History of the Early Church*, Grand Rapids, 1976, p. 30
- 6 Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament*, London, 1861, p. 100
- 7 Echlin, p. 30
- 8 Deacon, F. Jay, "Understanding and Misunderstanding the Church," from "The Gay Christian," August, 1976, p. 2
- 9 Boer sees this passage as the story of the origins of the elders or presbyters, from *A Short History of the Early Church*, p. 23
- 10 Deacon, p. 5; Echlin, p. 30
- 11 Deacon, p. 5
- 12 Boer, p. 29
- 13 Echlin, p. 19
- 14 Deacon, p. 4
- 15 Echlin, p. 48
- 16 Hardy, p. 17
- 17 Echlin, p. 19
- 18 Echlin, p. 76
- 19 Echlin, p. 16
- 20 Echlin, p. 66
- 21 Echlin, p. 35
- 22 Kung, *The Church*, Garden City, NY, 1976, p. 518
- 23 Echlin, p. 76
- 24 Kung, p. 527
- 25 Echlin, p. 23
- 26 Echlin, p. 38
- 27 Boer, p. 23
- 28 Echlin, p. 25
- 29 Echlin, p. 23
- 30 Echlin, p. 91
- 31 Paul, Robert, "The Deacon in Protestantism," from Nolan, *The Deaconate Now*, 1968, pp. 41-43
- 32 Thompson, *Through the Ages*, John Knox Press, Atlanta, 1965, p. 338
- 33 Taken from the "Recommended Guidelines for the Office of Deacon in Churches Belonging to the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ," 1969. (Not copyrighted - my copy courtesy of Rev. Jeffrey Pulling.)

CHAPTER 2:

- 1 Perry, *The Lord is My Shepherd and Knows I'm Gay*, Nash Publishing Co., Los Angeles, 1972, entire book
- 2 See "In Unity," February 1978, pp. 19-20: "Women Make History in Houston, Texas,," April 1978, p. 20 "What is Sexism,," June/July 1978, p. 19, "Sexism: One More View"; August/September 1978, p. 22, "ERA Supporters March in D.C.: But Where Was MCC?"; February/March 1979: p. 10: "Is the Church Sexist? Is the Pope Catholic?"; and also see "The Gay Christian," notably Ziegler, Karen, "Creation Myths: Bridge to Human Wholeness," April/May 1979, pp. 19-26. See also, *Feminist Views of Christianity*, compiled by Jennie Bull, Mother Eagle Press, Northeast District of the UFMCC, c/o MCC, Washington, D.C., 1977.
- 3 Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schussler, "Women in the New Testament," p. 12, from *Scripture and the Church*, edited by Robert Heyer, NY 1976.
- 4 Fiorenza, whole article
- 5 (See footnote 2 above)
- 6 McCoy, Renee, "Third World Conference, A Personal Viewpoint," "In Unity" December 1979/January 1980, pp. 4-5

- 7 Neal, Maria Augusta, *A socio-Theology of Letting Go*, New York, 1977, whole book
- 8 Daly, Mary, *Beyond God the Father*, Boston, 1973: and Deacon, whole article

CHAPTER 3:

- 1 UFMCC By-laws, pp. 7 and 8
- 2 However, in the Early days of MCC, before there were By-laws, some deacons were ordained in local churches
- 3 Commission on Faith Fellowship and Order Report (FFO Report), 1979, (Attachment No. 2), p. 1
- 4 FFO Report, 1976, p. 1
- 5 FFO Report, 1976, p. 5
- 6 FFO Report, 1976, p. 6
- 7 Dulles, Avery, *Models of the Church*, Garden City, NY 1978, pp. 95-108
- 8 Dulles, pp. 67-79
- 9 Using Rollo May's definition of the "demonic" found in *Love and Will*, NY, 1969, pp. 122-172, especially: "the demonic is any natural function which has the power to take over the whole person. Sex and eros, anger and rage and the *craving for power* are examples . . . The demonic becomes evil when it usurps the total self without regard to the integration of that self, or to the unique forms and desires of others and their need for integration (p. 123). I believe this definition applies not only to individuals, but to groups and organizations, such as churches.
- 10 The UFMCC has three "levels" of local congregations: a "Study Group," ten or more persons who want to begin the process of forming an MCC church with no voting privileges; a "Mission," twenty-five or more people who can support a pastor at least part time, and who are beginning to reach out into the wider community, in ministry, with voting privileges at conferences; and a "Chartered Church," thirty-five or more people, who can support a pastor and a full program of church life, who have full voting privileges, and are fully self-governing (not under the jurisdiction of the Board of Home Missions).
- 11 UFMCC By-laws, p.
- 12 This concept was, in fact, proposed in "The Lenten Living Room Series," authored by Rev. Jim Glyer, Universal Fellowship Press, LA.

CHAPTER 5:

- 1 Glasse, James, *Putting It Together in the Parish*, pp. 103-106

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Books:

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ATTACHMENT 4: TRAINING PROGRAM

Sample No. 1

DEACONS TRAINING CLASS: REQUIREMENTS AND BRIEF DESCRIPTION

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Attend all classes (Wednesday 7-10 P.M., including worship)
2. Attend Reverend Perry's workshops.
3. Complete required reading.
4. Pass written and oral exams.
5. Class project: MCC Referral Booklet (for social service resources).

DESCRIPTION:

Sources of Faith: The Bible
Old Testament
Sexuality, Homosexuality and the Bible

Sources of Faith: The New Testament
Sexuality, Homosexuality and the New Testament
Relationship of Scripture to tradition, reason and experience

The History of Faith:

Our Roots:

Early Church, Middle Ages, Reformation, Denominationalism, Ecumenism, MCC

EXAM: Homosexuality and the Bible

Vocabularies of Faith: Catholic, Evangelical, Reformed, Liberal, Orthodox, Liberationist, Black American, MCC

DISCIPLESHIP: The Life of Faith - ALL DAY

Topics include: Living our Faith, Prayer, Witnessing, Shepherding, Inner Healing; The definition and purpose of the deaconate in MCC. (Deacon Candidates only).

Models of the Church: Institutional, Communal, Herald, Sacrament, Servant, (and liberation).
What does it mean to be the Church?

Faith and Ministry: What is Ministry? What is peer Counselling? Crisis Intervention? Use of MCC Referral Booklet.

Common problems

Conflict Management

Administration as Ministry

Vision of MCC

Inclusivity:

Racism

Sexism

Shalom Vision

Changing Structure (By-Laws review)

Changing Theology

Faith and Ministry

Prison Ministry

Substance Abuse

Youth and Aged

Death and Dying

Handicapped

Visitation
Wrap Up - Unfinished Business

WORSHIP, RITES AND SACRAMENTS - ALL DAY

Expressing our Faith
Use of sample "Sacramentary"
Practicum
Preaching as Faith Sharing

READING REQUIREMENTS FOR DEACON CLASS

Readings for 1st and 2nd class (PRIOR to class read):
(Including Biblical passages)

1. Unfolding Drama of the Bible - Bernard Anderson
2. One of the following:
Is the Homosexual My Neighbor - Mollenkott/Scanlon
or
Jonathan Loved David - Tom Horner
3. The Liberating Word - Letty Russell
4. Familiarize yourself with the Bible (any version that is NOT a paraphrase, e.g. King James, R.S.V., New English, Jerusalem, Good News), with the table of contents, read any of the introductions, etc., look at the maps. Come prepared with specific questions from the readings of the Bible itself. BRING YOUR BIBLE WITH YOU TO EVERY CLASS.
5. Article: "How We Use The Bible Today"
Article: "Hang Tough"

Readings for 3rd, 4th and 5th classes (PRIOR to class read):

1. IN UNITY - Doctrinal Statement, Faith, Fellowship and Order.
2. "Our Theological Task"
3. MODELS OF THE CHURCH - Avery Dulles
4. "You Are Accepted" - Paul Tillich
5. Diagram of Church History
6. Types of Theology Diagram
7. "Conservative Christians and Gay Rights"
8. "What Is Theology?"
9. "The Foot-Washin' Church and The Prayer Book Church"
10. "On Being A Christian" -
11. Other Examples

READING REQUIREMENTS FOR DISCIPLESHIP DAY (Read PRIOR to):

1. Prayer: Conversing with God - Rosalind Rinker
2. ONE OF THE FOLLOWING BY Dietrick Bonhoeffer:

Cost of Discipleship
or
Life Together

3. ANY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:
Healing Life's Hurts - Dennis & Matthew Linn
or
Healing of Memories - Dennis & Matthew Linn
or
Inner Healing - Ruth Carter Stapleton
or
The Power To Heal - Fr. Francis McNutt
4. ONE OF THE FOLLOWING BOOKS BY John Powell:
Fully Human, Fully Alive

or
Unconditional Love
or
He Touched Me

RULES FOR READING THE BIBLE PASSAGES (Lecture Notes)

1. Who wrote it? When? Where?
2. For Whom? (To God, Israelites, all the people?)
3. Why this form? (Song, Poem, Letter, History)
4. Essential Contents (What's the message)
5. What Changes did author intend and application in my live. (Conversion, none?)
6. Will the Holy Spirit allow me to receive this passage?
7. What difference does this passage make in my life?

FAITH OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. First to express radical monotheism.
2. First to adopt understanding of salvation history (God moves through history to redeem people, i.e. Judgement and Grace).

MOST IMPORTANT VERSE IN OLD TESTAMENT

Deuteronomy 6:4 "Listen, Israel: Yahweh our God is the one Yahweh. You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength. Let these words I urge on you today be written on your heart."

MOST IMPORTANT PASSAGE IN OLD TESTAMENT

Deuteronomy 26:5-9 "Then, in the sight of Yahweh your God, you must make this pronouncement: My father was a wandering Aramaean. He went down into Egypt to find refuge there, few in numbers; but there he became a nation, great, mighty and strong. The Egyptians ill-treated us, they gave us no peace and inflicted harsh slavery on us. But we called on Yahweh the God of our fathers. Yahweh heard our voice and saw our misery, our toil and our oppression; and Yahweh brought us out of Egypt with mighty hand and outstretched arm, with great terror, and with signs and wonders. He brought us here and gave us this land, a land where milk and honey flow."

GOD'S PROMISES TO ABRAHAM

1. I will make you a people (nation).
2. I will give you a home.
3. I will make you a blessing to all nations.

PARADIGMS

Models: i.e. The Wilderness Experience

UNFOLDING DRAMA OF THE BIBLE - BERNARD ANDERSON

1. Formation: Exodus/Wilderness
2. Reformation: Exile
3. Transformation: Jesus Christ/Church

HOW SHOULD WE USE THE BIBLE NOW?

1. Authority vs. Function of Bible
 - a. Purpose - What does the Bible do?
 1. Language of Church: You can't talk about God without using imagery of Bible.
 - b. Symbolic: Collective Memory Bank
 - c. Story and Parable in our midst

GOSPELS: GOOD NEWS - Preserve Tradition and Explain

SYNOPTIC: (See Together) Matthew, Mark, Luke and Acts

JOHANINE: J

PAULINE: Paul's letters

Thessalonians: Paul's oldest writings (40 AD)

Romans: Systematic Treatment

Chapter 1: Gentile Sin All persons have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. (3:23)

Chapter 2: Hebrew World

Acts: History book of the New Testament

EARLY CHURCH

1. Very little known: Acts, Letters of Bishops, etc.
2. Rites:
 - a. Communion
 - b. Pluralistic
 - c. Many people involved in diversified tasks, i.e. many gifts.

Early Church was faced with the JEWISH/GENTILE CONTROVERSY.

HEBREW (Holinistic)/GREEK

Body which should be trapped. Dualistic Bad=Darkness & Earth, Good=Light & Heaven) MINDSET

MAJOR CHALLENGE: Gnosticism: Jesus was not really human - a divine being. Believed that to be Christian you had a "special" knowledge of God. Out of flesh into spirit. Marcian said to throw out Old Testament: bad/creation.

Because of Gnosticism, Christianity had to define itself.

At one time, Christians were called atheists: they did not worship Roman Emperor and Gods.

Christians were kept together by common faith and lifestyle and love for each other through the Eucharist and Communion.

The Church actually maintained the history of western civilization.

VOCABULARIES OF FAITH (Lecture Notes)

The Christian Experience - The faith experience and how people talk about that.

Vocabulary: A set of words, expressions, concepts, images and at times, actions to describe our faith.

Theology: The study of God

Faith: the WHOLE experience

Vocabularies may overlap i.e. Catholic/Charismatic

Types of vocabularies: Individual, Local Church, Denominations, etc.

ROMAN CATHOLIC PRE-VATICAN II

1. Legitimate Authority: Priest, Bishop, Pope
2. Infallibility
3. Traditions
4. Canon Law (By-Laws)
5. Saints/Mary
6. Catechisis (Teaching)
7. Mass
8. Confession

EVANGELICAL

1. Altar Call
2. Salvation (By grace through faith in Jesus Christ)
3. Born Again!
4. Calvary - the cross
5. Baptism (Believers)
6. Witness
7. Sunday School
8. Repentance and forgiveness of sin
9. Preaching

PROTESTANT LIBERAL (United Church of Christ, some Methodist)

1. Modern Program
2. Intellectualism (Individual theologians)
3. Philosophical
 - a. World vs. Church, i.e. Use of science, psychology, sociology, history
4. Existentialism: God is the ground of our being
5. Values/Social Action
6. Love of God

PENTECOSTAL

1. Baptism of the Holy Spirit
2. Glossolalia: Speaking in tongues
3. Holiness: Sanctification as a lifestyle

FUNDAMENTALIST (A reaction to Darwin Theory of evolution, 19th Century)

1. Biblical Literalism

CHARISMATIC

1. Community
2. Gifts of the Spirit: "Charisma"
3. Healing

4. Renewal
5. Prayer (Groups)
6. Ecumenical

LIBERATION (Latin American; result of dialogue between Marxism and Christianity)

1. Praxis: Interplay of action - reflection - action. (We act, we make mistakes, we reflect on the mistakes and then we act again).
2. Oppression/Liberation i.e. Compare to Sin/Salvation
3. Systemic Sin: Oppression of whole groups of people by other whole groups of people. Corporate Social Problems/Sin. Rich society vs. poor society. Even though we may not be personally involved in the oppression, by not speaking against it, we are condoning it and, therefore, we are involved in systemic sin.
4. The EPISTEMOLOGICAL Privilege of the struggling poor or "The view from below." The only advantage of the poor is that God is on their side.

FEMINIST THEOLOGY

1. Belief: At one time, before written history, Matriarchy ruled the world. Reason: Men feared women because 1) Women could give birth and 2) Women could bleed and not die. Men felt women were very mystical. They worshipped female gods, etc. Then, came the power struggle once men realized they were involved in the birth creation. However, they felt that their sperm carried a complete, whole person and the woman was just fertile ground for growing. Result: Patriarchy.
 Misogyny: Hatred and fear of women.
 Matriarchy: Women rule.
 Patriarchy: Men rule.
 Androgyny: Equal.
2. Religious view: Patriarchy is wrong. Bible does not substantiate Patriarchy or, for that matter Matriarchy.

BLACK CHURCHES

1. Negro Church: was formed from necessity.
2. Black Church: was formed by choice. Once whites opened their churches, blacks were suspicious of their motives. Fear of white churches not being able to meet their needs, of being swallowed by the whites.

ASIAN Christian Theology

1. Liberation
2. Indigenous: Right here where you are, home grown theology. Asian Christians are a minority.

ROMAN CATHOLIC POST-VATICAN II

1. The people of God
2. Eucharist
3. Sacrament: A sign that embodies the truth/reality. "Christ is the sacrament of the encounter with God."
4. Spirituality: The whole realm of faith life.
5. Conscience: Every person is responsible for his/her relationship with God i.e. Church may not approve, but by your own conscience you have a right to your own belief. (Birth control, homosexuality, etc.)
6. "Pastoral Solution": Catholic Church has high ideals (i.e. birth control) however, circumstances may dictate different solutions other than Church belief: Local priest, bishop may "turn his head" at these different solutions. i.e. "Loopholes"

UFMCC

1. Inreach/Outreach: "God Talk"
2. Teams/Lenten Series
3. Liberation
4. Community

ORTHODOX

1. Holy Spirit - theological and mystical terms
2. Autocephalus: Each church has own pastor and bishop. No pope.
3. Large distinction between laity and clergy.

REFORMED

1. Located between Liberal and Evangelical
2. Biblical preaching
3. Predestination
4. Covenant theology

WHAT IS THEOLOGY?

Some Definitions:

1. Theology is to "name the self, the world and God." - Mary Daly
2. Theology is human activity involved in exploring the implications of those revelatory events in which God breaks into the flow of human history and effects a change in its direction. - UFMCC, Faith, Fellowship & Order Commission
3. Theology is "when you tell the old, old story of Jesus in a brand new way." - from IN UNITY
4. "Theology is the attempt, by means of human thought and human speech, scientifically to clarify the question that must arise as to the basis and norms that govern the Church and its preached message." - H. R. MacIntosh
5. Theology is "a method of thinking about the Christian Faith." - Carl Michaelson
6. Theology begins when human beings become aware of their limits, yet affirm life and learn to deal creatively on the boundaries. - (Paraphrase of Paul Tillich)
7. Theology is fun. - Anonymous
8. "Theology is the expository presentation of the Christian message . . . theology does not create or fashion its subject. Its subject is presented to it." - Karl Barth
9. "Christian theology is a theology of liberation. It is a rational study of the being of God in the world, in the light of the existential situation of an oppressed community, relating the forces of liberation to the essence of the Gospel, which is Jesus Christ." - James Cone (Author of A Black Theology of Liberation.)
10. "The theologian's job is to be a persistent 'muckraker' . . . 'demythologizer,' the exposé of fraudulent meanings and pasted-on values . . . the one who pricks pretences and shouts out for everyone to hear that the king has no clothes on." - Harvey Cox
11. Theology is "our explicit assertions about God." - Von Rad (O.T. Theology)
12. "Theology is the 'attempt' of humans to give shape and content to their experience of the transcendent." - Sheila Collins
13. "Theology's function is service to the Church, by means of criticism of actual religion and through the effort to help the Church understand what it believes." - H. R. Niebuhr
14. "Theological reflection--that is, the understanding of the faith arises spontaneously and inevitably in the believer, in all who have accepted the gifts of the Word of God." - Fr. Gustavo Gutierrez
15. Theology is the process of exploring with others our relationship with and to God.
16. Whenever thought is utilized in examining the Bible, doctrine, Church, or faith, there theology has begun its work, and the person doing the thinking is a theologian. - Hugh T. Kerr, The Theological Seminary, Princeton, NJ

DENOMINATIONAL FAMILIES

(Lecture Notes)

1. Roman Catholic: The only "branch" of Western Christendom until the 16th Century. Church tradition, canon law. The Pope. Universality in liturgy, hierarchy. Largest single "denomination" world-wide. Nearly 200 years of continuity. Apostolic succession.
2. Lutherans: Oldest Protestant group. Martin Luther. Fidelity to the Gospel above medieval scholasticism; justification by faith, "Sola Scriptura" Have conserved much of pre-Reformation liturgy. Political quietism. "Priesthood of all believers."
3. Reformed or Presbyterian: Reformation in Switzerland, France, Holland, Hungary, Scotland. John Calvin, John Knox; central attention to Scripture. Scripture-sermon sacrament. Biblical preaching. Church order -- "Presbuterus" -- Elders -- presbyteries -- government, representative. Reformed Churches, Presbyterians.
4. Anglican or Episcopal: Diversity of theological beliefs -- some Protestant, some Anglo-Catholic. "Bridge Church" -- Common history -- English Reformation (less radical) government by bishops (episkopos) -- ordination. Book of Common Prayer, unity in liturgy.
5. Free Churches: Congregationalist -- "congregational meetings", great doctrinal latitude.
 "gathered community"
 from Calvinist Puritan
 Church as voluntary association
 Took strong roots in America
 Baptist -- "believers baptism" -- public profession of faith. Largest U.S. denomination, separation of Church and State. Bible.
 Society of Friends -- "Quakers" Sometimes called a "sect." No sacraments, ordinations, or creedal affirmations. Form left-wing Puritanism. George Fox -- mystic -- "Inner Light" (Holy Spirit), silent worship, social activism, pacifism.
 Methodists -- John Wesley -- out of Anglican Church. Evangelical, stress on sanctification, the experience of salvation, "Christian perfection," personal religion and social responsibility.
 Disciples of Christ -- "Campbellites" -- desire for Christian unity based on early Church -- authority of Scripture, believers baptism, weekly Lord's Supper -- "No creed but Christ"
6. The Sects: Pentecostals
 Much persecution -- "Anabaptists" -- anti-infant baptism. State is corrupt -- Church should separate from world. Some millennialists -- Primitive Church (ACTS). Holy Spirit. Mennonites, Hutterites, etc. Newer groups -- emotional religious conversion -- Exclusivity. -- Jehovah's Witness? -- Mormons? -- Spiritualist?
7. Eastern Orthodoxy: "Autocephalus" Churches -- geographical divisions. Contemporaneous with Roman Catholic -- split in 1054. Scripture and Tradition -- Early Church councils. Voice of Church infallible. Liturgy -- powerful, ancient -- sharp clergy/laity distinction. Ongoing activity of the Holy Spirit.

MODELS OF THE CHURCH

By Avery Dulles

(Lecture Notes)

The five concepts or models of the Church:

1. INSTITUTIONAL MODEL

- a. Visible Church
- b. Authority

2. HERALD MODEL

- a. Proclaim the Word of God
- b. Preach the Good News
- c. God's sovereignty

3. SACRAMENTAL MODEL

- a. To be a credible sign of the Kingdom of God.
- b. Show what the Kingdom looks like.
- c. Member: Anybody of community that embodies Christ.

4. SERVANT MODEL

- a. Diakonos: (Deacon) Slave or servant. Jesus Christ was the diakonos of our salvation.
- b. Church exists to feed the hungry, help the poor, etc.

5. COMMUNION MODEL

- a. Church is the community of the people of God.
- b. Share in the grace of Christ together.
- c. Spiritualized
- d. Ecumenical
- e. Biblical
- f. Goal: Lead people into communion with God

Nancy Wilson's 6th Model: The Liberation Model

SHARED FAITH EXPERIENCE

Faith experience = one's conscious awareness of God

Sharing faith experience - may take on several forms: I may share any of the movements of my person in coming in contact with God: HEARING (reading, observing, listening to the Word of God or God's action in my life or someone else's life), REFLECTING (pondering on the meaning of the above), RESPONDING (actual praying to God), ENJOYING GOD'S PRESENCE (contemplating, experiencing great joy, love), TURNING (conversion to God, repenting, reconciling).

Sharing is giving our gifts to community for its upbuilding

TWO MAJOR WAYS OF SHARING FAITH EXPERIENCE

A. Sharing About My Experience

1. I tell others where and how I have recognized God in my daily life, my prayer, my relationships, my ministry, outdoor nature, my leisure, struggles, achievements. Or where and how I failed to recognize God.

(Gospel on Disciples on way to Emmaus. Lk 24:13-35)

2. I share my insights, my feelings, my hopes, my aspirations in regard to God and God's presence in my life or in the life of others.

(Main point to share: Where is God in my experiences? How does God call me?)

(See article: Gerald Grosh, S.J., "Shared Faith Experience," Review For Religious, January 1974 (Vol. 33), pp. 85-90).

B. Sharing My Prayer

1. I pray my personal prayer aloud for others to hear.

Occasions: Ministry, family, celebrations, anniversaries, sorrow, events in the Church, institution, city, county world, gathering of friends, prayer group.

2. Some guidelines

- a) Pray as you can - your own prayer from the heart.
- b) Do not feel constrained to listen to everything others say or pray. Go on quietly with your own prayer.
- c) When praying for and with others, try to place yourself in their position and need, ask the Spirit to inspire you how to pray, and pray from their heart to God.
- d) If spontaneous prayer dries up, turn to a formal prayer: Our Father (Mother), Rosary, Jesus Prayer, Glory Be, or others.

Main point to remember: Where two or three are gathered, I am there in their midst. Shared prayer celebrates the realness of the Lord.

SELF-REVELATION

1. What are the things I am grateful for?
2. How do I experience joy and zest for life?
3. How do I experience suffering in my life?
4. What do I hope for?
5. What am I afraid of?
6. How do I handle anger in my life? What makes me angry?
7. How do I deal with conflict?
8. How do I experience myself as loved by others? Am I able to let them love me?

9. How do I experience myself as loving others?
10. How do I experience myself as committing myself to something or someone?
11. Where do I experience aloneness?
12. Am I lonely? In what circumstances?
13. Where do I experience the gift of freedom?
14. Where do I feel bound or helpless?
15. Where do I experience myself vulnerable? What are the results of this experience?
16. What is my image of myself?

EXPERIENCE OF FAITH IN GENERAL:

1. What are my goals as a religious? In the Deaconate? In community?
2. What is my image of God?
3. Who is Jesus for me?
4. What are the most meaningful aspects of my faith life?
5. What are the most meaningful aspects of the deaconate?
6. Where do I experience risk? How concretely do I place my trust in the Lord?
7. What kind of prayer am I currently gifted with? Have I experienced growth in prayer? What has helped me?
8. Do I find my praying of the Gospels a "NOW" experience of the glorified Lord?
9. What is my experience of Christ suffering?
10. Am I afraid to admit that I am a sinner? What is my experience of this?
11. Do I have a spiritual director? Has this relationship been helpful to me over the years? How?
12. Where do I find my faith tested? When do doubts arise?

EXPERIENCE OF FAITH IN COMMUNITY:

1. Has my community helped me grow as a person? How? How do I experience this NOW?
2. Has my community enabled me to be a more effective Deacon? How?
3. In what ways do I experience or have I experienced a corporate spreading of the Gospels?
4. What are the things in my community that keep me from dealing with contemporary culture?
5. What are the things in my community which keep me from sharing my faith experiences and my feelings with others?
6. What is my attitude toward the members of my community?
7. Do I find joy in the members of my community?
8. How much do I trust the members of my community?
9. How do I feel about sharing my faith and feelings with members of my community?
10. Do I love my community? Its members? Its traditions? How is this experience?
11. How do I foster unity within my community?
12. How do I build affective bonds within my community?

EXPERIENCE OF FAITH IN THE DEACONATE:

1. How do I experience my faith in the deaconate?
2. Where do I find Christ in the deaconate?
3. Has my community enabled me to be a more effective deacon? How?
4. In what ways have I experienced a corporate spreading of the Gospel?
5. What are the things in my community which hinder me from being a more effective deacon?
6. How do I presently bring God and Christianity to persons who have lost their faith?
7. How do I presently reach out to those whom we do not normally touch in our church community?
8. What is my experience as minister of the word?
9. What is my experience of being a healer?
10. What is my experience as a spiritual counsellor?
11. What is my experience as a participant of the Eucharist?
12. How much prophetic role is there in my deaconate?

EXPERIENCE OF FAITH WITH REGARD TO SOCIAL AWARENESS:

1. Where do I personally experience my union with those who are materially poor? With those who are psychologically poor? With those who are spiritually poor?
2. How do I incorporate a felt social concern in the work I do?
3. Is there a social dimension to my prayer and to my relationship with Jesus?

4. How do I face social evil and injustice?
5. Where and how do I compromise with the evils of social injustice?
6. Where and how do I work against the evils of social injustice?
7. How do I personally support the structures of society which suppress the poor?
8. How do I attempt to break down the evils of social structures in the work I do?
9. How does a social morality flow out of religious experience for me?

Proposed Deacon Training - Course No. 2

Rev. Rob Shivers

A preliminary interview should be set up with prospective candidates prior to the time they would appear before the Board for approval into the Candidacy. They should submit a letter of request to the Board, a Statement of Call to the Diaconate and a General Statement of Faith, all of which become a part of the permanent file. These should be limited to one page each and be used in presentation of the individual to the Board.

The interview will be to present the basic program, time to cover, expectations, etc. and to determine the individual's attitude toward the program and the necessary discipline. At the end of the training program before being presented to the Board for possible approval to the Diaconate another interview should be held to learn of any doubts, program suggestions and any area of Call or specific ministry the individual may feel. These should be noted on the Candidate's file.

Sample forms for use in record keeping are included here. Records should be kept purely objective and very clear. Records of attendance become part of the permanent file. Homework may be returned to the Candidate after they are accepted by the Board to the Diaconate. Evaluations and Christian Service Reports are also included in this category.

Keep the Diaconate program simple and to the point. There is a reason of exposure, experience or need to everything that is taught or required. BE PRAYERFUL AND LET THE HOLY SPIRIT LEAD. Use human inventiveness to keep the classes interesting but don't stray too far from the proven pathway. THIS COURSE HAS BEEN USED REPEATEDLY IN VARIOUS LOCALES AND IT DOES WORK! Use blackboard, discussion or any other method you are comfortable with and feel free to "fatten" the material and keep it up to date. It is only the very Basics of what a good Deacon should know. Hopefully the Deacon will continue to learn even after s/he is installed.

DEACON CANDIDATE COURSE OUTLINE

I Ministry of the Diaconate

- A. Orientation
- B. The Deacon as a person
- C. The Deacon as a caring Witness

II Study of Worship

- A. Worship symbols and components
- B. Worship and its Meaning
- C. Communion
- D. Worship practice

III Homosexuality and the Bible

- A. Christians and Sexuality
- B. Tradition and the Church
- C. Old Testament Scriptures
- D. New Testament Scriptures

IV Counseling

Overview and tips; drug awareness; counseling basics in all areas of need.

V Homiletics: the Theory and Practice of Preaching

VI Old Testament Bible Studies

- A. The Pentateuch
- B. History
- C. Books of Wisdom and Poetry
- D. Major Prophets
- E. Minor Prophets

VII New Testament Studies

- A. Life of Christ (the Gospels)
- B. History
- C. Epistles: Pauline
 General
- D. Prophecy

VIII Innovative Ministries

- A. Prison
- B. Deaf
- C. Blind
- D. Youth & Children
- E. Senior Citizens
- F. Alcohol & Drug Abuse

Rate person from 1 to 5 for each category below, (1 is the highest rating and 5 is the lowest) by placing an X in the appropriate column. If you feel there is insufficient information, or if the category does not apply to the person being rated, place an X under UE (unable to evaluate).

PERSONAL AWARENESS	1	2	3	4	5	6	UE	Comments
Dependability								
Creativity								
Adaptability								
Resourcefulness								
Ability to say "no"								
Feeling of acceptance:								
1. by Ministry Team								
2. by Congregation								
3. by Community								
Capacity to deal with:								
1. Anger								
2. Authority								
3. Ambiguity								
4. New Ideas								
5. Conflicts								
6. Alternate lifestyles								
Self Control								
1. Chemical dependency								
2. Confidentiality								
3. Time Management								
4. Financial Management								
5. Positive Health Habits								
Self								
1. Reliance								
2. Acceptance								
3. Initiative								
4. Criticism								

MINISTRY

Worship																																																																			
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SUGGESTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- † Indicates any one of these may be chosen to fulfill the reading requirement.
- * Indicates required reading.

MINISTRY

- Harpers Bible Commentary or Haley's Bible Handbook
- * A good Concordance and Bible
God's Young Church, William Barclay
Situation Ethics, Joseph Fletcher
- * The Lord Is My Shepherd and He Knows I'm Gay, Troy Perry
- * Our God, too, Thomas Swicegood

WORSHIP

- † Full Circle, David Means
- † Modern Liturgy Handbook, J.P. Moss
Women and Worship, Sharon Emswiler
Celebration of the Gospel, Hardin, Quillian & White
The Worship of the Church, Massey Shepherd
Christ, the Sacrament of the Encounter with God, Schollabeck, ed.

HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE BIBLE

- Jonathan Loved David, Tom Horner
- † The Church and the Homosexual, John McNeill
- † Is the Homosexual My Neighbor? Scanzoni & Mollencott
Christian Sexuality, Norman Pittinger
Counseling the Homosexual, Clinton Jones

COUNSELING

- Love and Addiction, Stanton Peele
- * Between Parent and Child, Dr. Heim, Ginott
Games People Play, Eric Bern
Ministering to Alcoholics, Keller
- * Death and Dying, Kubler-Ross
Death, the Final Stage of Growth, Kubler-Ross

MONTHLY CHRISTIAN SERVICE REPORT

Title, name _____ Month reported _____

CHURCH SERVICE PARTICIPATION:

Sunday AM: _____ Sunday PM: _____ Midweek: _____ Other: _____

VISITATION WORK:

Hospitals _____ Home _____ Prison _____

COMMUNITY & MEMBERSHIP CONTACT:

Welcome Letters _____ Phone Calls _____ Letters of Special Nature _____

Social Events _____ Other _____

COUNSELING:

Date	Code	Referred From:	Referred To:	Disposition:

Use other side for any special problems or additional comments.

CODE:

- (1) Spiritual
- (2) Suicide
- (3) Sexuality
- (4) Domestic
- (5) Alcohol

- (6) Drugs
- (7) Material Aid (Housing, Food, Money)
- (8) Supportive
- (9) Unable to Assist

THE MINISTRY OF THE DIACONATE

DISCIPLINE is most important. It provides structure, growth, a means of determining whether or not one "measures up" to standards and a sense of true worth and accomplishment as a Deacon when the preliminary work is done. It also establishes a means for evaluation on something other than the basis of personality for pastor, Board, other Deacons and congregation. In the Diaconate, Sunday-only Deacons are offensive.

This is God's business, to be treated with seriousness and commitment, beginning with the training period. If there is consistent failure to be present, prepared and on time it will be taken as a demonstration of lack of ability or commitment in this area. The individual will then need to identify the problem areas and to evaluate with the instructor whether the Diaconate is for him/her at this time. Commitment, priorities, time and energies available for this effort are some of the areas to be examined.

Accurate records will be kept for this purpose so that the student, the instructor and the Board can specifically evaluate these factors. The students write their own records and will hopefully weed themselves out of the program if it becomes apparent that circumstances or other factors will not permit an effective ministry. These records become part of the student's permanent file.

If a student finds it necessary to be late or absent s/he is to notify the instructor in advance, make arrangements for makeup, obtain missed notes from another student and turn in the homework due, either prior to the class or at the first possible opportunity afterwards. Too many "reasons" for absences or tardiness, etc. may become "excuses" and this can indicate lack of commitment. On the other hand, too many genuine "reasons" may indicate that this is not God's time for the individual to be in the Diaconate. It is no disgrace to drop out of the program if careful and prayerful evaluation indicates this to be the case.

Discipline is part of the training program as much as the lesson material presented. So are service and ministry requirements. They also provide opportunities for the Board, congregation, Deacons and Pastor(s) to observe growth, abilities and performance.

NOTE: Give starting time, days and frequency of classes and having presented your expectations of them, tell what they can expect from you, i.e.: prompt closing time for each class, length of training period before being presented to the Board for collaring (usually two hours is sufficiently long for a class session, offering a great deal of material to be absorbed and not creating too much strain for the next day at work). Encourage students to discuss difficulties and problems with you. Offer them an alternative such as the two of you going together to a respected person as mediator if the difficulty cannot be resolved between the two of you. Explain that a five minute ONLY grace period is allowable for clock variances, traffic difficulties and other unexpecteds . . . but it is the individual's responsibility to allow sufficient time for promptness.

If a big brother/ sister sponsor system with Deacons is in effect, explain the system, its purpose and that assignments to specific individuals will be made in a few weeks. This gives you time to get to know some of the needs and personality traits of each so that better teaming can be done. This is also the time to explain Peer Evaluation, Board Evaluations or other special programs/practices in your congregation, such as due dates for monthly Christian service reports, weekend off requests deadlines, etc. Develop the ability to say "NO" and to do so appropriately in time and manner. Deacons need to avoid "burn out" for the sake of themselves, their relationships, the church and the people they serve. Use wisdom, regular prayer, meditation, worship and personal renewal . . . but the best preventative measure is the proper use of the word "NO".

Present suggested reading Bibliography, indicating those books which are required reading. (Suggested Bibliography attached) Also indicate whether their word, written or verbal, is sufficient evidence of having read the material or if you wish written reports, etc.

One of the main goals of training for MCC ministry areas is that people of one set of religious traditions learn to be open to the methods, approaches and needs of those from other traditions. We need to be aware of and able to adequately minister to all people, to accept them where they are and to share with and learn from them, regardless of their backgrounds. This is essential for effective MCC ministry and service. Knowing why certain things are done the way they are traditionally, historically and theologically and the symbolic meanings, aids in this understanding.

The Deacon Candidate program is not intended to give more than the basics, an overview or the tip of the iceberg. It is expected that your learning experience will not cease when you become a full Deacon. You must continue to learn on the personal, classroom and experiential levels. The areas of training and experience covered in this program are there to familiarize you with some of the ministry opportunities available - whether or not you are particularly interested in a given area. In case of need you will be capable of stepping in to fill that need, even though you may not do it as well as you might wish or whether or not it is your specific ministry area or concern.

The Deacon is called to deal with all areas of human concern. You must be able to set yourself aside, to be available to people and capable of demonstrating that personal care and concern that others hunger for.

Your study will cover: the Ministry of the Diaconate; Worship: Its structure and Meaning; The Bible and Homosexuality; Counseling and Personal Ministry; Homiletics: the Theory and Practice of Preaching as well as Bible Study.

(NOTE: Bible Study may be an ongoing class even after individuals are licensed as full Deacons. A Deacon who has not been at least superficially exposed to the whole Bible or who has never read and/or studied it straight through is often at a decided disadvantage in his/her ministry.)

NOTE: The following is an example. You may have a different program of available ministries, but each candidate should get a taste of those currently operating and any other areas of possible ministry development, such as sign language, where training is available, and further outreach ministries could eventually be developed if there was leadership, interest or available personnel. This is one way to broaden the church's ministry program.

You will be expected to take peer counselling training, serving the line twice with an experienced counselor the first month and twice on your own the second month. You will take six basic sign language classes; prepare and conduct a nursing home service as a group; attend a film or other opportunity on alcoholism; make hospital visits with pastor or deacons as scheduled; and serve in services as assigned. These will be assigned after you have covered the preliminary classroom material needed for each area of concern.

Read the UFMCC and local By-laws pertaining to the Diaconate.

Read the UFMCC Statement of Faith (Attached).

MCC encompasses many varying traditions and tastes. These stem from three general forms of Church government: Episcopal, governed from the top down; Congregational, which is governed from the bottom of the structure upward; and Presbytery, which combines these two forms. The form used must serve to effectively function in Evangelization, Administration, Education and Promotion while still remaining compatible with Christian concepts. Remember that though these forms may differ widely, their champions have all invoked the example of the Early Church as their scriptural authority . . . this is especially true relative to the office of Deacon. We too use the Early Church as our scriptural base, adding to this by borrowing from the other traditions as they have developed over the years, expanding our existing concepts and adding those ethical and practical innovations required to make our particular ministry and calling effective in Community and the Culture in which we find ourselves.

- I. The office of Deacon is based on the Sixth chapter of Acts: scriptural approach:
 - A. The first office-holders of the Early Church
 1. Complaints of the widows
 2. A special ministry in addition to that of a disciple
 - B. "Assistants" to pastor: Stephen and Philip as preaching deacons, evangelizing, starting churches.
- II. Traditions developing after separation of clergy from laity after Constantin's declaration that the Roman Empire was to be Christian.
- III. UFMCC consideration of office of Deacon:
 - A. The most important and necessary arm of the Church ministry
 - B. Effective implementation of the Deacon's ministry on the local level.

DISCUSSION: How was the office of Deacon fulfilled in your church background? What do you hope to do/be as a Deacon?

ASSIGNMENT: Using the following scriptural references list in your own words the qualifications necessary for a Deacon. Colossians 2 & 3; Philippians 4; 1 Timothy 3; Acts 6:3.

Close With Prayer By A Student

(Sample Class)

SESSION II

The Deacon as a Person

(Open with prayer by Instructor or student)

DISCUSSION and ASSIGNMENT REVIEW: (to be handed in after discussion): What do you think a Deacon is? How do you see the role and duties of a Deacon? What are the qualities of a Deacon as given in the Scriptures? (LIST on blackboard) (See attached) What is the difference between *Spirituality* and *Religiosity* or *Churchianity*? Collect papers and place in individual files.

It is tragic for a person to go through life never recognizing their own uniqueness and God-given gifts. Each one of us is a valuable "Limited Edition" – like a snowflake, fingerprint or voiceprint: **DISTINCTIVE!**

Special talents for teaching, building fellowship, caring, witnessing, reconciling and mediating, stewardship, administration, prayer, speaking and preaching are but a few of those God bestows upon us. It is an individual's responsibility to determine their strengths and abilities and to develop and nurture them as good stewards. These talents and abilities should be actively used, for if they are neglected they will atrophy and we may lose them altogether.

"Study to show yourself approved unto God a worker that need not to be ashamed." **GROW!** This training will provide you with new tools and skills that will energize you like a battery as you apply them to steady use. You can be just as effective a Deacon as you want to be.

We have to create a healthy climate if we want to experience growth, however. Some of the elements needed for such a climate are: honesty about your need for further development; openness to new truths; involvement in worship, Bible Study and Fellowship; maintaining friendship with non-Christians so you can be a vital influence in their lives; accepting responsibility in the church; and making a real effort to share your Faith with others. It will take diligence, for God has called you to a BIG task, but the Holy Spirit will also empower you to do it if you will seek God's help and not try to do everything in your own strength!

Develop a caring spirit that will cause you to stop, reach out and help others who are in need. Sometimes this requires a great deal of patience and longsuffering, trust and acceptance, but most of all it requires **LOVE!** This is part of your Christian witness.

As your personal Faith grows you will more and more demonstrate through your daily life that indeed you have had a personal experience with the Lord. Stephen was like this, and the more his Faith and Experience with Christ grew the more he cared about others. As a layperson he preached wherever there was an opportunity to tell the good news of Christ and he was even concerned for his enemies as shown in his prayer while they were stoning him. He never lived to see the results of that prayer, but his ministry on earth was continued through the works of Paul, known than as Saul the persecutor who held the garments of those who stoned Stephen while he prayed!

As a Deacon you are also a leader. People will be watching you even outside the Church whether or not you are aware of their eyes. When crisis comes you cannot be indifferent. Listen to and respond to the facts and feelings others express. Your listening, caring will go far further than any advice you could hope to offer. When you care you will take the lead in serving and you will serve with confidence because you know your concern is genuine in the love of God.

You need not be overly concerned with what to say or do. Your concerned presence in itself demonstrates that you care. This is especially true when you are ministering in times of grief. Allow others to ventilate their emotions rather than stemming them with torrents of advice. If you have prepared yourself for such times through reading, study and prayer you will be more than adequate to any situation in which the Lord places you!

One cannot be an effective Deacon if they rely solely on their own knowledge, skills and power. You need God's power, wisdom, strength, guidance and help. Spending time daily in prayer will help keep you in touch and powered for the times of crisis and need. It is not always easy to know and accept people as they are without this help. By learning how to use your Bible and being familiar with it from daily use you are in a better position to deal positively with every factor in your life and to help others with theirs. If you learn to respect and listen to the other side of the story it will help you avoid a judgmental attitude. Remember, people who hurt are often sensitive and afraid to reveal their true selves. Keep a sympathetic ear, listening with the inner ear of God's Spirit, developed through your daily prayer and Bible meditation.

A. MINISTRY PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PASTOR

An ideal relationship can be demonstrated to the church and community by that between the Deacons and Pastor. When they work together well as a team they are both an example and an inspiration to others to also work together in harmony for the Lord. There are no "Star Performers" in the Kingdom; all are loved equally by our Lord regardless of what part of the Body you have been assigned to be. We are all co-laborers together in the Lord's vineyard and the

task can only be completed well when each member of the team gives his/her best as unto the Lord, no matter what the task may be. The Church needs floor sweepers as well as musical soloists and the Lord will reward each according to the attitude with which they labored and whether each of us has done our best in every circumstance. If we perform for the honor of people then we need to reassess our motives so that all that we do is done as unto the Lord. As a Deacon, you should be an example in spirit, love, devotion and loyalty.

You are in a unique position. You are viewed by others as a person who "cares" not because you are paid to do it and it is your job as some people stereotypically label clergypersons, but because you are genuine. There will be times when you can reach people and help when the pastor cannot just because of this attitude. Your presence may be taken more seriously. It is often easier for the congregation to talk to you because they feel you are more a part of them and can better understand them because you hold a similar job, dress the same way, etc.

You are the eyes, ears and arms of the Pastor, helping him/her to reach those that might otherwise never be served. You will even minister to different segments of the community. You must always be alert and guard your vow of confidentiality, both with the Pastor and with those with whom you counsel and talk. You are also a rumor control person; when it comes to rumor the word should stop with you; where there is opportunity to get to the facts and straighten out misconceptions, you will be able to counteract the negative gossip with positive facts and build the Church for God's work.

Yes, these things are time consuming and you will have to learn to be a careful steward of your time. Keep your priorities in mind! Usually God looks to the busy person to do the big jobs . . . but you must also know when to say "No" so there is enough energy left to do God's work when the Lord calls.

Be God's person
In God's Place
Doing God's Work
In God's Way.

Develop an empathy with your Pastor and your Pastor's work, for what he or she feels and experiences in the course of a day's work. One Pastor said of his calling, "Being a Pastor is something like many other tasks in life, and yet it is unlike anything else in the world. It is being loved and unloved, wanted and unwanted, understood and misunderstood, it's joy and sadness, heaven and a bit of hell sometimes . . . and sometimes all in the same day!"

Pray with and for your Pastor. You can enable him/her to experience spiritual power in their life and preaching like they have never known it before by adding the power of your prayers to their own.

Affirm your Pastor. Mediate where there is troubled waters but make yourself known as a person upon whom your Pastor can depend. If you can't say something positive in good conscience, then say nothing at all, urge the people involved to go with you to discuss the problems with the Pastor or take other supportive means. Most of all pray. The Pastor is not always right, but you do not help matters any if you are taking sides and being part of the problem rather than the solution in a Christian manner.

Fellowship with your Pastor and get to know him/her. Having the Pastor as a friend will help you to know and understand where he/she is coming from and help you to interpret for others. In fact, being friends with the Pastor will help you to appreciate one another more and make it easier to communicate, even when you have differences of opinion.

B. PARISH: the territory in which members or communicants of a congregation live and SERVE. This would include people of a specific commonality such as heritage as well as those who live within a given perimeter of population density. It could conceivably be an entire city or area for some churches.

Deacons are frequently called upon to take leadership roles in serving new or expanding parishes, serving as a worship coordinator, Bible Study leader, committee head, Social leader, etc. Oftimes a Deacon may have or share the responsibility of Church leadership in the absence of the Pastor as well.

Parish activity will involve many aspects of service. Social activities help new prospects to get to know Church people so they will feel more comfortable and inclined to attend worship services. Such activities help to involve others in Christian fellowship and wholesome fun activities and can also be used on occasion as a means of raising Church funds at the same time everyone is having a good time.

Personal services can also be offered in response to Christ's command to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and lonely and the prisoners. There are times when transportation and housing may be needed or help in locating a job. Peer counseling and referrals, information and instruction and membership outreach and conservation are other areas the Deacon will take responsibility for.

The single most important ministry is evangelism, witnessing to God's love for all people, involving as many as possible, planning new approaches and methods and keeping the work moving. All of this is part of the parish program that enables us to serve Christ in the part of the world where He has placed us.

If we are to have an effective evangelism program in our churches we must be open to the viewpoints of others. We must be able to adapt our Traditions to the tastes and value systems, sentiments and thought forms of those we wish to reach. How can we win them if we can't hear them? This is not to imply a compromise of basic Christian

Principles . . . but we must learn to differentiate between the traditions of the human and cultural and the Principles of Love as laid down by Christ. None of us possess the whole truth or are we totally in error on a given subject. We must have the courage of our convictions but be adaptable to the needs of others as we fulfill our beliefs. This is following Christ's example, putting the person above the form . . . and it takes a great deal of adaptive abilities sometimes if our parish includes large segments of those who come from a background or tradition vastly different from our own.

C. LEADERSHIP

Church activities are more successful when Deacons give their verbal endorsement and active participation. Indifference from just one Deacon can weaken the effectiveness of an entire effort. Deacons need to support their church's program of work by accepting responsibilities and offering their talents, attending faithfully the services and activities of the church, promoting and interpreting the work of the church to others and encouraging and appreciating the service of others in the church. Fellowship can be enjoyed in work as well as worship and play!

Such fellowship is the by-product of expectant, joyful worship. People get out of something what they put into it. If you take the leadership and encourage others to follow your example as you participate in the life of the Church you will help to build a warm atmosphere of fellowship. Your presence demonstrates your concern for the total welfare of the church and the people it serves; your attitude helps build a Christian Spirit that oils the machinery of the Church's efforts with Love. You also build fellowship by contributing to the unity of the church, accepting and listening to other's opinions and working just as hard on a project you voted against if you were in the minority as you do for projects you voted for.

D. ASSIGNMENT

Write a one page paper on what you believe regarding the Church as the Body of Christ and the church as a visible organization dedicated to doing God's work on earth. This is a statement of Faith that becomes a part of your permanent file and will be treated basically as confidential material for those who train, evaluate and authorize you to serve as a Deacon in this or other churches.

Close with Prayer by a Student

ASSIGNMENT FORMAT FOR SERVICE PARTICIPATION

ASSIST

- Call to Worship
- Lead Confession
- "Hold and Pour"
- Set up/Take down altar/wash purificators

SERVE

- Reading of the Gospel
- Thanksgiving prayer
- Serve communion

CONSECRATE

- Preach (when so instructed)
- Structure service (unless otherwise instructed)
- Prepare Call to Worship
- Absolution
- Contact songleader with hymn choice, theme or whatever is needed

WELCOME AND INVOCATION is always done by Pastor unless s/he is not present.

SERMON TOPIC and structure should be given to the Pastor for approval, any necessary changes, etc. on the MONDAY prior to the SUNDAY you are scheduled to preach.

CHRISTIAN SERVICE REPORTS are due by the 4th of each month.

WEEKEND OFF REQUESTS must be made prior to the 15th of the month prior to the month concerned.

SCHEDULES will be posted for the month by the first Sunday after the 15th of the month prior to the month concerned.

Session III

The Deacon As A Caring Witness

Open with Prayer

NOTE: Receive homework papers for individual permanent files (other work should be kept in file for reference until the person has been before the Board for approval as a Deacon and then may be returned to the person for own use.)

- I. The Acts account (8:1-4, 5-8, 26-40)
 - A. Philip's example of ministry. Philip was:
 1. Attentive to the Voice of the Lord
 2. Willing to be personally involved – responded promptly – was Spirit-led.
 3. Knew the scriptures – could interpret God's plan and lead another to salvation.
 - B. Stephen's example (6:5, 8, ff, 7:1-53 witness 54-60)
 1. Helped heal the break in fellowship in the Jerusalem Church
 2. An active Christian witness despite opposition
 - C. Early Christians won people to Christ by:
 1. *demonstrating* a loving, glowing, Christ-like spirit
 2. *lived* their Christianity daily – Christ was real to them
 3. *shared* their love with others
- II. Basic, vital spiritual functions of the church
 - A. Worship
 1. Must be maintained or church weakens and dies
 2. Enhanced through prayer, scripture reading, testimony, giving and music
 3. Praise and thanksgiving energize the people
 4. Deacons play a strategic role in building the spirit, setting the tone and serving with the pastor in worship.
 - B. Proclaim the Gospel
 1. Individual witnessing (Ethiopian Eunuch)
 2. Starting churches (Philip)
 3. Through commitment (martyrs)
 - C. Educate
 1. Training for effective service
 2. Deepen Christian experience through fundamentals of faith
 3. To involvement and stewardship
 4. To learn is to grow: as a person, a congregational member, a Deacon
 - D. Minister
 1. People are hurting – binding up the broken spirit
 2. Meet physical needs – food, transportation, housing, fellowship, listening
 3. The heart of the Deacon's work
 4. To different segments, backgrounds of tradition, economics, social, etc.
- III. Stewardship (a shepherd/under-shepherd leads, rather than drives, the flock)
 - A. Develop Christian priorities
 1. "love of money" – not money – which is the root of all evil (I Tim. 6:10)
 2. Examine personal life to keep possessions, people and things in proper priority to God
 3. We are stewards of all things, gifts from God
 4. Includes money, time, talent and energy
 - B. Time and talents
 1. An ultimate human possession
 2. A diminishing resource that slips easily through fingers
 3. Personal involvement in life and work of the church brings spiritual fulfillment
 - C. Influence
 1. What is said/done reflects on Christ, whom you represent
 2. Do or refrain from various conduct, not because of other's opinions, but because of the effect it will have on your Christian witness
 3. Confidentiality

4. Rumor control
5. Open-minded to new/different ideas, experiences and approaches

D. Money

1. The cheerful giving of tithes and offerings is an act of worship
2. Illegal or improperly gained money is out of character with a spiritual ministry
3. Money is good if used wisely, bad if used selfishly
4. Tithing should not put a limit on giving. 10% is only God's minimum for those who can afford more.
5. Tithing grudgingly or without love is misuse of resources; it can give a false sense of security (pride). God and Agape-love are NOT for sale
6. Christian stewardship involves concern with the use of resources after death through a Will

IV. Outreach

1. Evangelism – reaching beyond our four walls to all people
2. Follow-up – prevent “loss through the backdoor” by the Friendship Sponsor, visitation and other programs as well as by letters and phone calls.
3. Involve others in being God's person, doing God's work – encourage the priesthood ministry of all believers – the church, the Body of Christ
4. Special and fellowship functions
 - a. help meet needs of the whole person: emotional, social, physical, spiritual
 - b. involves others
 - c. a method of reaching new people
 - d. can be used as a fundraiser (CAUTION: not for *every* event or this becomes another fulfillment of what's bad about organized religion!)
5. Public Relations

To the:

 - a. parish and neighborhood
 - b. community
 - c. congregation

As an:

 - d. viable/stable/valid organization within the community
6. Political involvement on a non-political basis
 - a. must always allow for individual choice of involvement/non-involvement/or degree of involvement without guilt-tripping
 - b. avoid partisan politics
 - c. be aware of proper procedures for accomplishing your goals, such as Human Rights issues and concerns
 - d. the church must make its Christian influence felt on matters of general, community and human concern; be a leader or where good leadership exists be supportive in a strong way in matters of valid concern

ASSIGNMENT: Write a one-page paper each on what you believe regarding Christianity and regarding the Bible.

Close With Prayer

SUGGESTED ADMINISTRATION GUIDELINES FOR DEACON'S FUND

MONIES are *usually* dispersed on a loan basis – “pay back as you can.”

No bail money is provided – refer to an attorney. Rent, Transportation and Emergencies ONLY.

Decisions of determination made by the Deacon's Board.

Food closet.

Mile of Pennies for Missions is kept in a special Savings Account.

The checking account for Deacon's Fund dispersals should allow for the use of any two out of our possible signatures: the church treasurer and Deacon's treasurer, the pastor and Deacon's moderator.

The church treasurer audits and receives a report of all monies collected and dispersed.

Keep a cash operating fund available as a sort of “seed money.”

Deacons collect pennies for UFMCC Missions throughout the year.

Have the responsibility for and profits from the bookstore operation as Deacon's Fund source.

Special times of appeal for gift offerings to supplement the Fund may be held.

Deacons operate and utilize profits from coffee hour for the Deacon's Fund.

DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

- 1). Missing two consecutive scheduled meetings (alternate Deaconate and Ministry Team) without notification to the chairperson of the Peer Review Committee or the Pastor without valid reason:
 - A) Two meetings - Conference with Peer Review Chairperson.
 - B) Three meetings - Recommendation for one month suspension.
 - C) Four meetings - Deacon position in question/immediate peer review.
 - D) More than two suspensions - Immediate peer review.

- 2). Consistent tardiness for platform or other assigned duties, tardiness being not present 10 minutes before a service.
 - A) Two times - Personal conference with Peer Review Chairperson.
 - B) Four times - Recommendation for one month suspension.
 - C) Two suspensions - Immediate conference with Peer Review Committee.

- 3). Breaching Diaconate confidence (unless authorized by counselee). This means any and all counseling situations, being under the seal by the Pastor or discussing any matter under executive sessions.
 - A) First offense - One month suspension if found to blame by Pastor and the Head Deacon in conference.
 - B) Second breach - Immediate examination of function in Exhorter or Deacon status with immediate peer review.

A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE BY THE DIACONATE

WE, THE CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DEACONS, UNDER THE AUSPICES AND GUIDANCE OF THE PASTOR OF THIS CHURCH, BELIEVE:

- 1). That the Office of Deacon be open to all who feel the need to serve in this capacity after they have completed the required training as determined by the Pastor and are approved for service by the Board.
- 2). That these candidates be reviewed by the Peer Review Committee before presentation for licensing.
- 3). That this group be self-governed, and established guidelines of discipline for its betterment.
- 4). That any and all disciplinary action is finally in the hands of the Pastor and the Board of Directors. That the Peer Review Committee will only act in an advisory capacity in these matters.
- 5). That the members of the Diaconate be above reproach in the performance of their duties as Deacons.
- 6). That to be a deacon one needs to be involved, dedicated and an active part of the functioning of this church - not just a "weekend warrior" for the Lord.
- 7). That if any deacon or member of this church has a special ministry that is determined to be viable and valid that we support and help establish programs to supplement that ministry.
- 8). That established programs are to be continued with Deacon-Power alone, if necessary, until the Pastor decides to terminate them.
- 9). That the Diaconate is primarily under the authority of the Pastor.
- 10). That each Deacon be reviewed quarterly by a committee of elected peers regarding their effectiveness and worth to this congregation.

DEACON'S QUALIFICATIONS

1. Of honest or good report (reputation).
2. Spiritual character, full of the Holy Spirit.
3. Wise, able to discern right from wrong, true to convictions, without being judgmental.
4. Faith, strong enough to be willing to take risks for God.
5. Grave; possess Christian purpose in your life, have reverence for spiritual matters and whose words reflect that.
6. Not double-tongued; gossipy; relates honestly with all people both publicly and in private.
7. Temperate and not an abuser of chemical substances (alcohol, drugs, etc).
8. Good stewardship; not greedy or grasping, never exploiting others but keeping the material needs and desires in proper perspective.
9. A holder of the Faith; loyal to Christ and the Church.
10. Tested and proved; committed.
11. Blameless.
12. Strong, healthy relationships.
13. Spouse of one mate, honoring the commitments you made.
14. Caring for those within the realm of your responsibility, children, spouse, etc.
15. Bold in Faith, not ashamed of Christ or the church so their witness may be effective.

Have a vital union with God; avoid the pitfalls of human traditions and worldliness, lust of the flesh, and doubts caused by other's judgments on you that would enslave you, keep you from being free in Christ; proper spiritual priorities so things, people, etc. don't come between you and the Lord or work as idols; not selfish, covetous, given to anger and wrath, malice or slander or foul talk; truthful without prejudice; compassionate, kind, loving; peace within, thankful and dedicated to God's service in all you do; moderate, tolerant of others when they differ; prayerful with confidence in God; positive thinking rather than always looking for the dark side or the hidden motives of things, expecting the best of others, situations, etc.; above reproach; sensible, dignified, hospitable; teacher; gentle; a peacemaker with proper values regarding money; able to manage their own household well; established in the Faith; a good reputation outside the church; not two-faced; serious and faithful.

THESE SHOULD BE GIVEN FROM THE STUDENT'S RESEARCH FIRST, WRITTEN ON A BLACKBOARD SO ALL CAN SEE IF POSSIBLE, THEN THOSE NOT SUPPLIED BY STUDENTS FILLED IN WITH DISCUSSION RE: THE MEANING OF VARIOUS LISTINGS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF CHRISTIANITY TODAY AND THE MINISTRY OF MCC.

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH

NOVICE DEACON TRAINING

In the three months of your novitiate period as a Novice Deacon, you will have twelve in-class training sessions. You are expected to be present for these classes. If you are ill and cannot attend, you must notify the instructor in advance and arrange with someone to make a tape of the class and then turn in a report on that class the following week in order to receive credit for it. Any assignments due at the class missed should be sent with someone else to that class meeting. All assignments are to be turned in on time. Exams which are missed are to be made up within the next week.

CLASS SESSIONS:

- | | | |
|---------|-----|---|
| Session | 1: | Introduction to the Novitiate Period
Church Responsibilities |
| Session | 2: | Church Creeds: Apostles and Nicene |
| Session | 3.: | Salvation |
| Session | 4: | By-Laws: U.F.M.C.C. |
| Session | 5: | By-Laws |
| Session | 6: | Service Structure
Communion |
| Session | 7: | Homosexuality and the Bible |
| Session | 8: | Counseling: Spiritual |
| Session | 9: | Counseling: Sexual and Couples |
| Session | 10: | Sexism and Morality |
| Session | 11: | Pastor/Staff Relationships
Church Problems |
| Session | 12: | Spouse Relationships (Spouses in attendance) |

DEACONATE TRAINING SESSIONS

- Session I: Introduction
- A. What Is A Deacon?
 1. As presented in Scripture
 2. As viewed by the Fellowship
 3. As seen by local congregation and ministers
 - a. Requirements
 - b. Self-discipline
 - c. Commitment
- Session II: Private and Public Life
- A. As a Christian
 - B. Spiritual example
 - C. Social concerns
 - D. Responsibility of the Deacon in service
- Session III: Specific Responsibilities
- A. Christian testimony
 - B. In-service participation
 - C. Visitation
 1. Home
 2. Hospital
 - D. Bar Ministry
 - E. Prison Ministry
 - F. Counseling (Limited)
- Session IV: Worship Service Structure
- A. Discuss and Define
 - B. Define and Write
 - C. Step by step service participation
- Session V: Altar and Communion Area
- A. Identification and useage of elements
 - B. Discussion
- Session VI: Christian Seasons (Liturgical Calendar)
- A. Introduction
 1. Seasons
 - a. Color
 - b. Length
 - c. Emphasis
 2. Liturgical calendar
 3. Vestments
- Session VII: Review IV, V and VI
- A. Service participation
 - B. Altar ware identification
 - C. Christian seasons
- Session VIII: Counseling
- Session IX: Counseling
- A. Review printed material
 - B. Role playing
- Session X: Sermon Preparation
- Session XI: Sermon Preparation Continued
- A. Assign homily
- Session XII: General Reviews
- A. All areas
 - B. Homilies to be given in class

FORMAT OF CONVERSATION-WORKSHOPS ON VOCATION TO THE DIACONATE OF MCC

Sample 3

This program is designed for those who wish to examine whether they are called by God in the Church to become Deacons. No assumption is made that participants will accept or be offered appointment as Deacon by the Pastor and Board of Directors. The program is an enquiry, a learning and sharing experience, during which we will wait together upon God and begin to develop comprehension, sympathy and trust, a collegial spirit of sharing in the whole ministry of the whole Fellowship and Church.

We will meet once a week for two hours and fifteen minutes, for nine weeks. The first hour will be devoted to discussion of some dimensions of what the Diaconate means; after a fifteen minute break, we will use our second hour to talk about some "how-to-do-it" concerns. It is understood that a participant may unavoidably be absent once or even twice; in that case he/she should give advance notice, and should talk with another of the participants about what he or she missed.

FIRST HOUR SUBJECTS:

- 1.) Biblical references to the work of Deacons
- 2.) the By-laws of the UFMCC on Deacons
- 3.) Deacons in the dynamic of congregational and community life
- 4.) life-styles appropriate to Deacons
- 5.) the person-to-person dimension of Deacons' ministries
- 6.) innovative ministries and Deacons
- 7.) sexism, ageism and racism and other issues
- 8.) experiences and perceptions of present Deacons
- 9.) review, wrap-up and consideration of commitment

SECOND HOUR SUBJECTS

- a.) personal religious and devotional life
- b.) writing prayers and leading in prayer
- c.) preparation of addresses, welcomes, calls for offering, etc.
- d.) the Bible and homosexuality
- e.) feelings about "being out" and being a Deacon
- f.) continuing education possibilities
- g.) resources and referrals and policies
- h.) actual options of focus of ministry as a Deacon
- i.) review, wrap-up, and consideration of commitment

(Please note that we will be ready to alter the outline above to give ample consideration to matters not included but important to any individual taking part.)

DEACON'S TRAINING

Sample 4

The purpose of the deacons' course is to create a team of lay ministers who support one another in serving this church. The course is designed to facilitate trust and to allow each deacon candidate to explore his or her gifts and limitations. The theme of the course is INTEGRITY because I have come to believe that personal integrity is the most important quality a person can bring to ministry. This is not something we arrive at suddenly; in fact, we never "arrive" at integrity at all. It involves a continual, often painful process of self-evaluation, listening to one's brothers and sisters, and prayer. I ask you all to be meditating on the meaning of this word, even in the smallest decisions you make during the course of your everyday life and especially in your interactions with each other and with other church members.

MCC is going to continue to grow. We have important work to do in the community, and I believe our potential is virtually unlimited. It depends utterly on the personal growth of each of us. Our deaconate needs to be a dedicated, creative, and joyful group of people who are aware of their interdependence. I need you to continue to grow personally and collectively, even when it hurts (and it often does!) so that we can together be about the pastoring of this church.

A word about process: The most important thing we will be doing in this course is listening to each other. Really creative listening allows the speaker to hear him/herself in a new way. We can, in a very real way, "hear each other into speech"; that is, create a space with our love for each other for new growth and self-discovery. Especially in the section on telling our stories, I ask you to listen to the words and to the unspoken assumptions behind the words. Look at each other; aim for direct, strong eye contact every time you speak or listen. Hear the struggles and fears, the hopes and the dreams of your sisters and brothers and realize that we are engaged here in a collective task. Your discretion about the personal sharing that goes on in the class is required. A violation of this confidentiality agreement will be considered a very serious matter.

SYLLABUS FOR THE COURSE

October 25	establishing schedules, reviewing goals, discussion on worship (especially communion)
November 8	NO CLASS.
November 22	
December 6	Sharing of stories, faith affirmations, fantasy
December 20	
January 3	
January 17	Overview of the Bible
January 31	Christian Ecology: The interdependence of all members of the Body of Christ
February 14	Simulation game
February 28	Touching - Healing
March 13	Emergency Counseling
March 27	Worship: Defining the truths we can tell each other
April 13	Potluck dinner, evaluation

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- 1) Attendance at ALL SESSIONS (!!!!!!!)
- 2) A journal of your reflections on the class sessions, on your own developing ministry, and your own journey. Ideas you have about how you are learning to live in faith with integrity. Have fun with this assignment; use it as a tool for your own self-discovery. You will be asked to hand in the journals to me on January 17 and March 27.

Sample of
Deacon Contracting

A PROPOSAL FOR THE DIACONATE OF

Submitted by Pastor and Deacon Candidate

The diaconate will be defined as assisting the pastor in the following effectiveness areas:

* Giving ongoing attention to interactive processes throughout the church organization with the view toward facilitating improved interaction. She/he will consult with leadership people on this.

* Ascertaining programming needs, "growing edge" areas in the church's life, problems that impede our growth and effectiveness as an organization.

* Brainstorming and envisioning specific programs and strategies, and developing or adapting tools and techniques for them.

* Training volunteers for effectiveness areas.

* Coordinating volunteers for a developing project on an interim basis until the new project's viability is known and some more permanent place in the total church structure may be suggested.

* Maintaining a tie with the Stewardship Committee and its volunteer personnel pool.

We will work out the specific projects and the specific areas of responsibility in future discussions over the next few months.

Signed: _____

Pastor

Deacon

Sample No. 7

DEACON'S TRAINING SEMINARS

1980 Series

Wednesdays (first of the month) 5:00 p.m.

January 9th
(second Wednesday)

"Homosexuality & Scripture"
read "Homosexuality & The Bible" by Michael England prior to January 9th
meeting (seminar by)

February 6th
(first Wednesday)

"Alcoholism"
Read "AA Bigbook" available through AA chapter prior to February 6th
meeting (Seminar by)

March 5th
(first Wednesday)

"Death, Dying and the Family"
Read: "On Death & Dying" - by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross
"Widow" - Lynn Cain
Prior to March 5th meeting (Seminar by)

April 2nd
(first Wednesday)

"Suicide/ Crisis Calls"
Read: "Cry For Help" by Farberow/Schneiderman
Prior to April 2nd meeting (Seminar by)

May 14th
(second Wednesday)

—first quarter evaluation of individuals
—Discussion of future topics in areas of need for Deacons to minister, needs of
community fitting these needs into our ministry, Deacon's ministry.
—Evaluation of program
—Plans/events

June 4th
(first Wednesday)

"Sacraments & Rites"
Read: "The Sacraments" by E. Schollebeckx
"The Christian Fathers" by Maurice Wills (chapter "the Sacraments")
Prior to June 4th meeting

July 2nd
(first Wednesday)

"Hospitals & Visitations"
Read: (Book or books to be assigned)
Prior to July 2nd meeting

August 6th
(first Wednesday)

"Drug Abuse"
Special guest speaker will be secured
(There may be a reading assignment - no later than June)

September 3rd
(first Wednesday)

"Salvation Counseling"
Read: "Basic Christianity" by John Stott and "Cost of Discipleship" by
Dietrich Bonhoeffer
prior to September 3rd meeting

October 1st
(first Wednesday)

Second quarter evaluation

November 5th
(first Wednesday)

"Minorities, Sub-Cultures & Ghettos"
Read: "The Other America"
prior to November 5th meeting

December 3rd
(first Wednesday)

—Unstructured—

**"TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE
DIACONATE IN THE
UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES"**

Reverend Nancy L. Wilson

Los Angeles, California

August 1, 1980

INTRODUCTION OF THESIS

The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (U.F.M.C.C.) was founded in 1968, as a Christian Church for all people with a special ministry to the gay community. In our Fellowship By-Laws, (Attachment No. 1) we state that we recognize an order of lay ministry, the diaconate. The description and the reality of that office reflects the eclectic ecclesiology of the U.F.M.C.C. The role of the Deacon in M.C.C. has never been thoroughly examined or explored; it has merely been assumed. Behind this problem lies the fact that our Church has not systematically examined either its ecclesiology or its theology of ministry in depth; rather, we have attempted to live out our individual perceptions of what M.C.C. is. We now have two commissions (Government, Structures and Systems; and Faith, Fellowship and Order) which are trying to get M.C.C. people to discuss and come to some consensus about important theological/practical issues. Part of the reason for our previous neglect of these tasks is the fact that we are so new, and the urgency of the work we are doing, locally and Fellowship-wide, seems to leave no time for the "luxury" of a thorough thinking-through of such matters. Also, I suspect that some of us are afraid we'll really find out what others of us really think!!!

Churches complain of not knowing how to train deacons, mostly, I suspect, because no one is quite sure what they are. The purpose of my project has been to come up with a tentative, working definition of the diaconate in M.C.C. My method consisted of: 1) research on the history of the diaconate in the Christian Church; 2) research on contemporary ecclesiology and theologies of ministry (particularly from the viewpoint of Liberation Theology) as they impinge on the diaconate; 3) reporting the results of a survey I designed and compiled for those in M.C.C. involved with the diaconate; 4) finding within M.C.C. documents the basis for a theology of ministry and ecclesiology that could help define the diaconate for M.C.C.; 5) the implementation of a training program for deacons in a local M.C.C. church which involved the trainees in developing an authentic definition of the diaconate for themselves and 6) the evaluation of that program and final conclusions and recommendations to the U.F.M.C.C. concerning the future of the diaconate.

The following information was obtained from the records of the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, for the period 1900 to 1909. The records show that the total area of land in the State of California which was surveyed for the purpose of the Public Land Survey System was 1,000,000 acres. The records also show that the total area of land in the State of California which was surveyed for the purpose of the Public Land Survey System was 1,000,000 acres. The records also show that the total area of land in the State of California which was surveyed for the purpose of the Public Land Survey System was 1,000,000 acres.

The following information was obtained from the records of the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, for the period 1910 to 1919. The records show that the total area of land in the State of California which was surveyed for the purpose of the Public Land Survey System was 1,000,000 acres. The records also show that the total area of land in the State of California which was surveyed for the purpose of the Public Land Survey System was 1,000,000 acres. The records also show that the total area of land in the State of California which was surveyed for the purpose of the Public Land Survey System was 1,000,000 acres.

CHAPTER 1

A Brief Overview of the Diaconate in Christian History

The word "deacon" is derived from the Greek word "diakonos." That word, in its first century usage meant "one who waits on tables;" "servant;" or "lackey."¹ In the New Testament, it is used in the Gospels in that sense, and by Jesus as a metaphor for ministry (Luke 22:27; Matthew 20:26-28). The New Testament writers use the term to describe Jesus' model of ministry (Philippians 2:7; Acts 3:13; 26; 4:27, 30; Romans 15:8). Also, "diakonos" becomes, in the New Testament, a general term for service or ministry.² This New Testament understanding pre-dates the development of a monarchical episcopate in the Church in which the diaconate became a stepping stone to priesthood.

Edward Echlin, in his book, *The Deacon in the Church*, also claims a strong connection between the Greek word "leiturgia" (translated "the work of the people," from which we derive our word "liturgy") and "diakonia."³ This connection originates in the Levite tradition of the post exilic Jews. Echlin claims that there is a connection between the "leiturgia" of the levitical assistants to priests in the temple (as doorkeepers, custodians of the sacred vessels, Deut. 14:26-29; 2 Samuel 6:9) and the "diakonia" of waiting on tables (1 Cor. 11; James 1:27).⁴ There seems to be a consistent tension between the cultic and service connotations of the word "diakonos," and consequently the term deacon.

The actual history of the office of deacon in the Church is more complicated. Harry Boer, in *A Short History of the Early Church*, says, quite bluntly, "When and how the office of deacon originated is not known."⁵ On the face of it, that isn't very encouraging. The fact is that the New Testament does not speak of a uniform ecclesiology of theology of ministry (they had the same problem that M.C.C. now faces!). There are models and metaphors and references to charisms, gifts, offices, titles and disagreements about them, but no clearly revealed or "ordained" structure. Edward Schweizer speaks of this in his book, *Church Order in the New Testament*, in relationship to the ecclesiology of Luke-Acts:

"This almost casual mention of special office bearers in the Church, and the absence of definite titles, show that the order of these forms is not fundamental to the Lucan Church . . . very diverse forms, monarchical, oligarchical and democratic elements standing side by side." (p. 90)

Even Paul, Schweizer says, referring to the Church as the Body of Christ, speaks of many gifts and tasks, but no one order or system.⁶

There are only two New Testament passages which have been traditionally understood to speak of the origin or purpose of the diaconate: Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. There are problems with both these texts.

First of all, Acts 6:1-6 does not claim to tell the story of the origin of the diaconate, although it has been interpreted that way since Irenaeus made the connection.⁷ Scholars have debated the precise meaning of Acts 6:1-6. The story does not use the noun for deacon and it seems to "represent the rise of a Hellenistic office to counter Jewish control of the Church - a Hellenistic Seven to parallel the Jewish Twelve."⁸ Other scholars believe that the conflict was between Hellenistic Jews and Palestinian Jews (both Christians).⁹ Harry Boer sees this as the origin of elders (p. 23). The Acts passage is interesting in that the seven are elected, and there seems to be an acknowledgment of a need for persons to be set aside for the caring for human needs (feeding the poor). Certainly the event in Acts 6 is a precursor to the development of a Church office. However, at this stage, it seems to be a local matter, for local needs, not Church-wide. It is indigenous and spontaneous, not yet institutionalized. One must also remember that the Book of Acts is an idealized (and in this section, second-hand) account of Church origins. It is not at all clear that Luke intends for us to read this story as the story of the "first deacons."

1 Timothy is one of the pastoral epistles, whose authorship is questioned. The problem with 1 Timothy is its date. By the time 1 Timothy 3:8-13 was written, the office of deacon as a Church-wide office is assumed. By the time of the writing of the pastoral epistles, there has clearly been a major shift towards a hierarchical ecclesiology in a post-apostolic age. The Church apparently began with a fluid sense of Church order - with apostles, teachers, elders, prophets, etc. Gradually, however, the Church moved from this charismatic/servanthood style (not consistently ordered) to a monarchical episcopate.¹⁰ The reasons are probably many: the perceived need for "tightening control" in the face of persecution and "heresy;" the delay of the parousia, and the corresponding need for continuity in being faithful to the apostolic witness; and possibly the development of sacramentalism in which "great concern is focused on appointing guardians of the sacrament."¹¹ 1 Timothy is a product of this shift, and gives us no clues about the origins of the diaconate per se.

What do we know about this office of deacon which apparently emerges late in the first century?

The word "Civil War" is applied to the conflict between the North and the South. It is a term which is used to describe the struggle between the two sections of the country. The word "Civil" is derived from the Latin word "civilis", which means "of the city" or "of the state". The word "War" is derived from the Latin word "bellum", which means "war" or "conflict".

The American Civil War was fought between the North and the South from 1861 to 1865. It was the bloodiest war in the history of the United States. The war was fought over the issue of slavery. The North was against slavery and the South was in favor of it. The war ended with the victory of the North. The South was defeated and slavery was abolished. The war was a turning point in the history of the United States. It showed that the North was stronger than the South. It also showed that the North was more united than the South. The war was a great victory for the North and for the Union.

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From the writings of Bishop Ignatius of Antioch (our first clear picture of a monarchical bishop)¹² we are told that the deacon is a "special friend" to the Bishop.¹³ The deacon often functioned as the bishop's assistant, counselor, administrative aide and cultic servant, paralleling the temple tradition.¹⁴ During this period (the early second century) the Bishop was still the head of a local Church, not a large diocese. So, in a sense, the deacon was a "pastoral assistant." According to the *Didache* (the first known church manual/sacramentary, from the early second century) deacons were 1) not to be greedy, 2) to be appointed/ordained according to the needs and size of a congregation and 3) to be special ministers of the Eucharist.¹⁵ Further:

"... the deacon must be ready for whatever the Bishop directs. He may receive the contributions of the faithful, though passing them on at once to the bishop, and should minister devotedly to the sick and infirm, if necessary laying down his life for the brethren (sic)."¹⁶

Deacons are reported to have been active, in the early Church, in the ministries of the sacraments, word and charity.¹⁷ Sometimes they served as mediators of disputes, in listening to people's needs and complaints (the "eyes and ears of the bishop.")¹⁸ Deacons preached, taught and consoled. They were the doorkeepers at the liturgy (watching for persecutors, escorting the catechumens out of the sanctuary before Holy Communion).¹⁹

In the East, deacons were the "heralds" of the church in worship (possibly akin to being a "master of ceremonies," or the "liturgist" as we often say). The deacon in the East was responsible to lead the "bidding" prayers (community prayers) during worship.²⁰

The "Golden Age" of the diaconate really occurred during the latter days of persecution and the post-Nicene missionary age of the early church.²¹ During that time, bishops were frequently traveling, in prison, or hiding out. There were not enough bishops or priests to meet the pastoral and missionary needs of the early church. Deacons were needed to fill in, to function as pastors and missionaries.²² Deacons preached until the late 5th century²³ and were oftentimes functioning as the "managers of the community,"²⁴ possibly comparable to the "parish administrator" of contemporary American Catholic Churches. They developed comprehensive (for those times) social services in Rome²⁵ and an archdeacon (assistant to the Pope) actually became Pope without first being made a priest.²⁶

What happened to change the role of the deacon? Apparently, as the needs of the church began to change in the post-apostolic age, and with the rise of "sacerdotalism" the role of the deacon came into question. The Bishop/deacon relationship was essentially Hellenistic in origin, while the office of presbyter (elder or "priest") was of Jewish origin. Bishops were elders also²⁷, and these offices began co-existing. It becomes clear that priests who were not Bishops resented the "special friend" and seemingly privileged role of the deacon, believing that this should be reserved for the priest. There was resistance to the idea of a deacon being able to "fill in" for the Bishop or a priest. It was the viewpoint of the priests that there should be a strict ascending hierarchy of deacon-presbyter-bishop, and no permanent diaconate. Their viewpoint eventually won out, especially as the need for deacons to "fill in" declined.²⁸

One of the reasons for the decline in that need was the rise of monasticism, which captured the imagination of those attracted to the servanthood style of ministry. In many ways, one might say that the monastic movement took the place of the diaconate in acts of service, teaching and charity.²⁹ The end result was that the diaconate suffered as the institutionalization of the Church solidified, and it was trivialized into becoming only a ceremonial cultic role (assisting with the Eucharist), a temporary stepping stone to the priesthood. The permanent diaconate simply withered until: "On the eve of the Reformation . . . his (the deacon's) was a preliminary albeit ascending grade in a pseudo-Dionysian hierarchy."³⁰ The Church had largely adopted the hierarchal model of the Roman Empire for Church government.

One of the cornerstones of the Reformation was the recognition of the incompatibility of this model with the New Testament and for the needs of the people. Calvin, in particular, sought to reorganize the Church in order (in his opinion) to bring it into conformity with what he perceived as a "pre-Dionysian" and "pre-hierarchal" New Testament order. The problem is, of course, that Calvin *inferred* a church order, or read it into the New Testament. In any case, Calvin attempted to restore the diaconate, not so much to have it as part of the clerical hierarchy, but as a lay office, as managers of the temporal affairs of the church.³¹ In addition, "Calvin attempted to restore the office of deacon to its original function (relief of human need). In Geneva, they took over the care of the poor, the needy and distressed, including the sick (hospitals)."³² By "original function" Thompson is referring to Acts 6, and the assumption that that passage is the basis of the diaconate, an assumption I have questioned.

In any case, the Reformation brought with it a revival of the diaconate, taking many forms. Below is a brief list of the current practices in several mainline denominations:

Baptist: Deacons are elected by the congregation, not ordained, care for the spiritual life of the congregation, help the needy, assist in administration of baptism and Lord's Supper, discipline of careless Church members. Trustees handle finances.

Episcopal: The Bishop ordains men and women to the office of deacon, a step to the priesthood, help the priest with worship, especially Holy Communion; also seek out and serve the poor. *Perpetual Deacons:* ordained, assist at communion, teaching and caring for the sick and needy and indigent. Deacons are subject to the Bishop and must pass an examination on a course of study. There have been deaconesses, but these were religious orders, fading away with the advent of women's ordination.

Methodist: The office of deacon is the first stage on the way to ordination as an elder, usually occurs at the end of the first year of seminary, it is itself an ordained office, open to women and men. Works of charity are carried out by the Women's Society of Christian Service.

Presbyterian: Deacons are responsible to the Session yet called forth by the congregation, not seminary trained, yet ordained to this special task, flexible but concerned with broad spectrum of human needs, i.e., social justice matters, ministry to special groups within a community. They may or may not assist in the serving of communion. Includes women.

Roman Catholic: One of three minor orders, ordained, in the course of preparation for the priesthood. They are celibate in the Roman Rite. However, one of the most interesting developments has been the revival of the permanent diaconate in the post-Vatican II Church, in response to local needs for pastoral ministry. There has been discussion of and now use of married deacons (males), after a course of study and preparation they are ordained; to function permanently to preach, baptize, marry, but not say mass.

United Church of Christ: Differing definitions in different conferences; open to women and men; called by local congregation. Help pastor prepare people for baptism, confirmation, church membership, death and burial; prepare and distribute Holy Communion; being sensitive and responsive to local church needs.³³

In the next chapter, I will examine some questions arising from this overview.

During the past few years the Government has been making considerable progress in the development of the country, particularly in the fields of education, health, and agriculture. The Government has also been working to improve the living standards of the people and to create more jobs.

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